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MARIUS THE EPICUREAN.

MARIUS THE EPICUREAN

HIS SENSATIONS AND IDEAS

BY

WALTER PATER, M.A.

FELLOW OF BRASENOSE COLLEGE, OXFORD.

Χειμερινὸς ὄνειρος, ὅτε μήκισται αἱ νύκτες.

VOLUME II.

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CONTENTS.

PART THE THIRD.

CHAPTER		PAGE
XV.	STOICISM AT COURT	9
XVI.	SECOND THOUGHTS	19
XVII.	MANY PROPHETS AND KINGS HAVE DESIRED TO SEE THE THINGS WHICH YE SEE . .	37
XVIII.	"THE CEREMONY OF THE DART" . . .	48
XIX.	PARATUM COR MEUM, DEUS!	63

PART THE FOURTH.

XX.	GUESTS	81
XXI.	THE CHURCH IN CECILIA'S HOUSE . . .	96
XXII.	THE MINOR "PEACE OF THE CHURCH" . .	112
XXIII.	SAPIENTIA ÆDIFICAVIT SIBI DOMUM . .	130
XXIV.	A CONVERSATION NOT IMAGINARY . . .	142
XXV.	SUNT LACRIMÆ RERUM	171
XXVI.	AH! VOILÀ LES ÂMES QU'IL FALLOIT À LA MIENNE!	188
XXVII.	THE TRIUMPH OF MARCUS AURELIUS . .	193
XXVIII.	ANIMA NATURALITER CHRISTIANA . . .	203

PART THE THIRD.

CHAPTER XV.

STOICISM AT COURT.

THE very finest flower of the same company—Aurelius with the gilt *fasces* borne before him, a crowd of exquisites, the empress Faustina herself, and all the elegant blue-stockings of the day, who maintained, it was said, their own private sophists to whisper philosophy into their ears as they made their toilets—was assembled again a few months later, in a different place and for a very different purpose. The temple of Peace, a foundation of Hadrian's, enlarged by a library and lecture-rooms, had grown into an institution resembling something between a college and a literary club; and here Cornelius Fronto was to deliver a discourse on the *Nature of Morals*. There were some, indeed, who had desired the emperor Aurelius himself to declare his whole mind on this matter. Rhetoric had become almost a function of the state. Philosophy was upon the throne; and had from time to time, by request, delivered an official utterance with well-nigh divine authority. And it was as the delegate of this authority, under the full sanction of the philosopher-

pontiff, that the aged Fronto purposed to-day to expound some parts of the Stoic doctrine, with the view of recommending morals and making them acceptable to that refined but perhaps prejudiced company, as being, in effect, one mode of comeliness in things—a fair order, and, as it were, a kind of music in life. And he did this earnestly, with an outlay of all his science of mind, and that eloquence of which he was known to be a master. For Stoicism was no longer a rude and unkempt thing. Received at court, it had largely decorated itself: it had become persuasive and insinuating, and sought not only to convince men's intelligences but to allure their souls. Associated with that fair old age of the great rhetorician and his winning voice, it was almost Epicurean. And the old man was at his best on the occasion; the last on which he ever appeared in this way. To-day was his own birthday. Early in the morning the imperial letter of congratulation had reached him; and all the pleasant animation it had caused was in his face, as, assisted by his daughter Gratia, he took his place on the ivory chair, as president of the *Athenæum* of Rome, wearing with a wonderful grace the philosophic pall—in reality, nothing else than the loose woollen cloak of the common soldier, but fastened on his right shoulder with a magnificent clasp, the emperor's birthday gift.

It was an age, as sufficient evidence shows, whose delight in rhetoric was but one element of a general susceptibility; an age not merely taking pleasure in

words, but experiencing a great moral power in them: and Fronto's quaintly fashionable audience would have wept, and also assisted with their purses, had his purpose to-day been, as sometimes happened, the recommendation of some object of charity. As it was, arranging themselves at their ease among the images and flowers, these amateurs of beautiful language, with their tablets for noting carefully all the orator's most exquisite expressions, were ready to give themselves wholly to the intellectual treat prepared for them; applauding, blowing loud kisses through the air sometimes, at the speaker's triumphant exit from one of his long, skilfully modulated sentences; while the younger of them meant to imitate everything about him, down to the inflections of his voice and the very folds of his mantle. Certainly there was rhetoric enough for them—a wealth of imagery; illustrations from painting, music, mythology, the experiences of love; a management, by which subtle, unexpected meaning was brought out of familiar words, like flies from morsels of amber, to use Fronto's own figure. But with all its richness, the higher claim of Fronto's style was rightly understood to lie in gravity and self-command, and an especial care for the purity of a vocabulary which rejected every term and phrase not stamped with the authority of the most approved ancient models.

And it happened with Marius, as it will sometimes happen, that this general discourse to a general audience had the effect of an utterance dexterously

designed for him. With a conscience still vibrating forcibly under the shock of that day in the amphitheatre, and full of the ethical charm of the character of his friend Cornelius, as he conceived it, he was questioning himself with much impatience, as to the possibility of an adjustment between his own elaborately thought-out intellectual scheme and the old morality; which, as such, had as yet found no place in it, inasmuch as that old morality seemed to demand the concession of certain first principles which might misdirect or retard him in the effort towards a complete, many-sided existence; or distort the revelations of the experience of life; or curtail his natural liberty of heart and mind. And yet there was the taint of a possible antinomianism there; of which (his imagination being filled just then with the noble and resolute air, the gaiety almost, which composed the outward mien and presentment of his friend's inflexible ethics) he felt a nascent jealousy, as being, to say the least, a kind of slur upon his taste, wounding that intellectual pride to which it was one peculiarity of his philosophic scheme to allow so much. And it was precisely such a moral situation as this that Fronto appeared to be contemplating. He seemed to have before his mind the case of one—Cyrenaic or Epicurean, as the courtier tends to be, by habit and instinct, if not on principle—who yet experiences, actually, a strong tendency to moral assents, and a desire, with as little logical inconsistency as may be, to find a place for duty and righteousness, in his house of thought.

And the Stoic professor found the key to this problem in the purely aesthetic beauty of the old morality, as a prevailing actual system in things, fascinating to the imagination—to taste in its most developed form—through association; a system or order, as a matter of fact in possession, not only of the great world, but of the rare minority of *élite* intelligences; from which, therefore, least of all would the sort of Epicurean he was contemplating endure to be, so to speak, an outlaw. He supposed his hearer to be sincerely in search of a practical principle (and it was here that he seemed to Marius to be speaking straight to him) which might give unity of motive to an actual rectitude of life—a probity and cleanness of life, in fact—determined partly by purely natural affection, partly by an enlightened self-interest, or the feeling of honour; due in part even to the mere fear of penalties: no element of which, however, was distinctively moral, as such, in the agent; and affording, therefore, no common ground of sympathy with a really ethical being like Cornelius, or even like the philosophic emperor. Performing the same offices; actually satisfying, even as they, the external claims of others; rendering to all their dues—a person thus circumstanced would be wanting, nevertheless, in a principle of inward adjustment to the moral beings around him. How tenderly—more tenderly than many stricter souls—might such an one yield himself to kindly instinct! what a fineness of charity in passing judgment on

others! what an exquisite conscience of other men's susceptibilities! He knows for how much the manner, because the heart itself, counts, in doing a kindness. He goes beyond most people in his care for all weakly creatures; judging, instinctively, that to be but sentient is to possess rights. He conceives a hundred duties, though he may not call them by that name, of the existence of which purely duteous souls may have no suspicion. He has a kind of pride in doing more than they, in a way of his own. Sometimes, he may think that those men of line and rule do not really understand their own business. How narrow, inflexible, unintelligent!—what poor guardians, he may reason, of the inward spirit of righteousness—are some supposed careful walkers according to its letter and form! And still, all the while, he allows no moral world as such; real though it be to Æschylus, to Socrates, to Virgil; as also to a thousand commonplace souls.

But, over and above those practical rectitudes, thus determined by natural affection or self-love or fear, he may notice that there is a remnant of right conduct—what he does, still more what he abstains from doing—not so much through his own free election, as from a deference, an "assent," entire, habitual, unconscious, to custom—to the actual habit or fashion of others, from whom he could not endure to break away, any more than he would care to be out of agreement with them in questions of mere manner, or, say, even, of dress. Yes! there were the evils,

the vices, which he avoided as, essentially, a soil. An assent, such as this, to the preferences of others, might seem to be the weakest of motives, and the rectitude it could determine the least considerable element in moral life. Yet here, according to Fronto, was in truth the revealing example, albeit operating upon comparative trifles, of the general principle required. There was one great idea (Fronto proceeded to expound the idea of humanity—of a universal commonwealth of minds—which yet somehow becomes conscious, and as if incarnate, in a select body of just men made perfect) in association with which the determination to conform to precedent was elevated into the weightiest, the fullest, the clearest principle of moral action; a principle under which one might subsume men's most strenuous efforts after righteousness.

Ὁ κόσμος ὡσανεὶ πόλις ἐστιν—the world is as it were a commonwealth, a city: and there are observances, customs, usages actually current in it—things our friends and companions will expect of us, as the condition of our living there with them at all, as really their peers, or fellow-citizens. Those observances were, indeed, the creation of a visible or invisible aristocracy in it, whose actual manners, whose preferences from of old, become now a weighty tradition as to the way in which things should be or not be done, are like a music, to which the intercourse of life proceeds—such a music as no one who had once caught its harmonies would willingly jar.

In this way, the *becoming*, as the Greeks—or *manners*, as both Greeks and Romans said, would indeed be a comprehensive term for duty. Righteousness would be, in the words of the Cæsar himself, but the "following of the reasonable will and ordinance of the oldest, the most venerable, of all cities and polities—the reasonable will of the royal, the law-giving element in it—forasmuch as we are citizens in that supreme city on high, of which all other cities beside are but as single habitations." But as the old man spoke with animation of this supreme city, this invisible society, whose conscience had become explicit in its inner circle of inspired souls; of whose common, pervading spirit, the trusted leaders of human conscience had been but the mouthpiece, and of whose successive personal preferences in the conduct of life, the old morality was the sum,—Marius, who had been so jealous of the claims of that old morality, felt that his own thoughts were passing beyond the actual intention of the speaker; not in the direction of any clearer theoretic and abstract definition of that ideal commonwealth, but rather as if in search of its visible locality and abiding-place, the towers of which, so to speak, he might see and count, according to his own old, natural habit of mind. It would be the fabric, the outward fabric, of a system reaching, certainly, far beyond the great city around him, even if conceived in all the machinery of its visible and invisible influences at their grandest —as Augustus or Trajan might have conceived of

them—however well that visible Rome might pass for a figure of this new, unseen Rome on high. At moments, Marius even asked himself with surprise, whether it could be some vast secret society, to which Fronto referred?—that august community, to be an outlaw from which, to be foreign to the manners of which, was a loss so much greater than to be excluded, into the ends of the earth, from the sovereign Roman commonwealth. Humanity, a universal order, the great polity, its aristocracy of elect spirits, the mastery of their example over their successors—these were the stimulating ideas, the abstract intellectual conceptions, by association with which the Stoic professor had tried to elevate, and unite under a single principle, men's moral efforts, himself lifted up with so real an enthusiasm. But where should Marius search for all that, as more than an intellectual abstraction? Where were those elect souls in whom the claim of humanity became so amiable, winning, persuasive—whose footsteps through the world were so beautiful in the actual order he saw; whose faces averted from him, would be more than he could bear? Where was that comely order, to which as a great fact of experience he must give its due; to which, as to all other beautiful "phenomena" in life, he must, for his own peace, adjust and relate himself?

Rome did well to be serious. Fronto's discourse ended somewhat abruptly, as the noise of a great crowd in motion was heard below the walls; where-

upon, the audience, following the humour of its more youthful element, poured itself into the colonnade, from the steps of which Marius saw the famous procession, or *transvectio* of the military knights, passing over the Forum, from their trysting-place at the temple of Mars, to the temple of the Dioscuri. It was taking place this year, not on the day accustomed —anniversary of the victory of the Lake Regillus, with its pair of celestial assistants—and amid the heat and roses of a Roman July; but, by anticipation, some months earlier; the almond-trees along the way being still in leafless flower. Behind their light trellis-work, Marius watched the riders, arrayed in all their gleaming ornaments, and wearing chaplets of olive round their casques; the faces below which, what with plague and battle, were nearly all youthful. It was a flowery scene enough; but had to-day its fulness of warlike meaning; the return of the army to the north, where the enemy was again upon the move, being imminent. Cornelius had ridden along in his place; and, on the dismissal of the company, passed below the steps where Marius stood, with that new song which he had heard once before floating from his lips.

CHAPTER XVI.

SECOND THOUGHTS.

AND Marius, for his part, was grave enough. Fronto's discourse, with its wide prospect over the human, the spiritual, horizon, had set him on a review—on a review of the isolating narrowness, in particular, of his own theoretic scheme. Long after even the roses had faded, when "the town" had departed to country villas or the baths or the war, he remained behind in Rome; anxious to try the lastingness of his own Epicurean rose-garden; setting to work over again, and deliberately passing from point to point of that old argument with himself, down to its practical conclusions. That age and our own have much in common—many difficulties and hopes. Let the reader pardon me if here and there I seem to be passing from Marius to his modern representatives—from Rome, to Paris or London.

What really were its claims as a theory of feeling and practice? It had been a theory, avowedly, of loss and gain, so to call it—of an economy: and if it missed something in the commerce of life, which

some other theory of feeling and practice found itself able to save, if it made a needless sacrifice, then, it must be in a manner inconsistent with itself, and lack theoretic completeness. Did it make such a sacrifice? What did it lose?

And we may note, as Marius could hardly have done, that that new Cyrenaicism of his is ever the characteristic philosophy of youth—ardent, but narrow in its survey; sincere, but apt to be one-sided, and even fanatical. It is one of those subjective and partial ideals, based on vivid, because limited, apprehension of the truth of one aspect of experience—in this case, of the beauty of the world and the brevity of man's life in it—of which it may be said, that it is the special vocation of the young to express them. In the school of Cyrene, in that comparatively fresh Greek world, we may think we see that philosophy where it is least *blasé*, as we say; in its most pleasant, its blithest, and yet perhaps its wisest form, youthfully bright in the youth of European thought. But it grows young again for a while in almost every youthful soul. We hear it spoken of sometimes, as the appropriate utterance of jaded men; but in them it can hardly be sincere, or, by the nature of the case, an enthusiasm. "Walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes," is, indeed, most often, according to the supposition of the book from which I quote it, the counsel of the young, who feel that the sunshine is pleasant along their veins, and wintry weather, though in a general way foreseen, a long way

off. The youthful enthusiasm or fanaticism, the self-abandonment to one favourite school or phase, of thought or taste, which occurs, quite naturally, at the outset of every really vigorous intellectual career, finds its special opportunity in a theory such as that so carefully put together by Marius, just because it seems to call on one to make the sacrifice, accompanied by a vivid sensation of power and will, of what others value—the sacrifice of some conviction, or doctrine, or supposed first principle—for the sake of that clear-eyed intellectual integrity or consistency, which is like spotless bodily cleanliness and nicety, or scrupulous personal honour; and which has for the mind of the youthful student, when he first comes to appreciate it, itself the fascination of an ideal.

The Cyrenaic doctrine, then, realised as a motive of earnestness or enthusiasm, is not so properly the utterance of the "jaded Epicurean," as of the strong young man in all the freshness of his thought and feeling, fascinated by the notion of at least lifting up his life to the level of some bold, adventurous theory; while, in the first genial heat of existence, physical objects, also fair and strong, beat potently upon his unwearied and widely opened senses. He discovers a great new poem every spring, with a hundred thoughts and feelings never expressed, or at least never expressed so well, before. The workshops of the artists, who can select and set before one what is really most distinguished in visible life, are open to him. He thinks that the old Platonic, or the new

Baconian philosophy, has been better explained than by the authors themselves, or with some striking original development, this very month. In the quiet heat of early summer, on the dusty gold morning, the music comes, louder at intervals, above the hum of voices from some neighbouring church, among the almond-trees in blossom; valued now, perhaps, only for the poetically rapt faces among priests or worshippers, and the mere eloquence and tact of its preachers of righteousness and religion; for indeed, in his scrupulous idealism, he feels himself to be something of a priest, and that devotion of his days to the contemplation of what is beautiful, a sort of perpetual religious service. Afar off, how many fair cities and delicate sea-coasts await him! At that age, with minds of a certain constitution, no very choice or exceptional circumstances of life are needed to provoke an enthusiasm something like this. Life in modern London even, in the heavy glow of summer, is stuff sufficient for the fresh imagination of a youth to build its "palace of art" of; and the very sense and enjoyment of an experience in which all is new, are but enhanced, like that glow of summer itself, by the thought of its brevity; which gives him something of the gambler's zest, in the apprehension, by dexterous act or diligently appreciative thought, of the highly coloured moments which are to pass away so quickly. At bottom, perhaps, in his elaborately developed self-consciousness, his sensibilities, his almost fierce grasp upon the things he values at all, he has,

beyond all others, an inward need of something permanent in its character, to hold by: of which circumstance, also, he may be partly aware, and that, as with the brilliant Claudio in "Measure for Measure," it is, in truth, but darkness he is "encountering, like a bride." But the inevitable falling of the curtain is probably a long way off; and in the daylight, at least, it is not often that he really shudders at the thought of the grave—the weight above, and the narrow world and its company, within. When the thought of it does occur to him, he may say to himself—Well! and the monk, for instance, who has renounced all this on the security of some dim world beyond it, really acquiesces in that "fifth act," amid all the consoling ministries around him, as little as I should at this moment; though I may hope, that, as at the real ending of a play, however well acted, I may already have had quite enough of it, and find a true wellbeing in eternal sleep.

And precisely in this circumstance, that, consistently with the function of youth in general, Cyrenaicism will always be more or less the special philosophy, or prophecy, of the young, when the ideal of a rich experience comes to them in the ripeness of their receptive, if not of the reflective, powers—precisely in this circumstance, if we rightly consider it, lies the duly prescribed corrective of that philosophy. For it is by its exclusiveness, and negatively rather than positively, that such theories fail to satisfy us permanently: and what they really need for their correction,

is the complementary influence of some greater system, in which they may find their due place. That *Sturm und Drang* of the spirit, as it has been called, that ardent and special apprehension of half-truths, in the enthusiastic, and as it were prophetic advocacy of which, a devotion to truth, in the case of the young —apprehending but one point at a time in the great circumference—most naturally embodies itself, is levelled down, surely and safely enough, afterwards, as in history so in the individual, by the weakness and mere weariness, as well as by the maturer wisdom, of our nature:—happily! if the enthusiasm which answered to but one phase of intellectual growth really blends, as it loses its decisiveness, in a larger and commoner morality, with wider though perhaps vaguer hopes. And though truth indeed, lies, as has been said, "in the whole"—in harmonisings and adjustments like this—yet those special apprehensions may still owe their full value, in this sense of "the whole," to that earlier, one-sided but ardent pre-occupation with them.

In the world of old Greek thought, we may notice with some surprise, that, in a little while, the nobler form of Cyrenaicism—Cyrenaicism cured of its faults —met the nobler form of Cynicism halfway. Starting from opposed points, they merged, each in its most refined form, in a single ideal of temperance or moderation; which again was almost identical with the practical wisdom of Socrates, reflecting, in its worthiest form, the conscience of Greece. Something

of the same kind may be noticed regarding some later phases of Cyrenaicism. If it starts with a series of considerations opposed to the religious temper, which the religious temper holds it a duty to repress, it is like it, nevertheless, and very unlike any lower development of temper, in its stress and earnestness, its serious application to the pursuit of a very unworldly type of perfection: and it may be thought that the saint, and the Cyrenaic lover of beauty, would at least understand each other better than either would understand the mere man of the world. Stretch them one point further, shift the terms a little, and they might actually touch.

Perhaps all theories of morals tend, as they rise to their best, and as conceived by their worthiest disciples, to identification with each other: the most unlikely neighbours meeting at some point higher than any one of them. For the variety of men's possible reflections on their experience, as of that experience itself, is not really as great as it seems: and as the highest and most disinterested of ethical *formulæ*, filtering down into men's actual everyday existence, reach the same poor level of vulgar egotism; so, we may fairly suppose that all the highest spirits, from whatever contrasted points they may have started, would yet be found to entertain, in their moral consciousness as actually realised, much the same kind of company; to hold, far more than might be thought probable at first sight, the same personal types of character, and even the same artistic and

literary types, in esteem or aversion; and to have, all of them alike, the same savour of unworldliness. Cyrenaicism, then, old or new, may be noticed, just in proportion to the completeness of its development, to approach, as to the nobler form of Cynicism, so also to the more nobly developed phases of the old, or traditional ethics. In the gravity of its conception of life, in its pursuit after nothing less than a perfection, in its apprehension of the value of time—the passion and the seriousness which are like a consecration—*la passion et le sérieux qui consacrent*—it may be conceived, as regards its main drift, to be not so much opposed to the old morality, as an exaggeration of one special motive in it; it might, with no real misrepresentation, be referred or adjusted to that old morality, as a part to the whole. And if we see this, then comes the question of the value, in all ethical speculation, of common terms—of terms, that is, which bring the narrower, or exceptional ideals and tendencies of character, into connexion with those which are larger and more generally typical; which, instead of opposing them, explain the former through the latter. Such terms, or conceptions are important in practical ethics, because they largely decide our manner of receiving experience, and the measure we receive of it. They are like instruments, or points of view, which determine how much, and how truly, we shall reflect of life; they lead our attention to this or that element in it, to this or that capacity in ourselves, in preference to another; and, like some

optical contrivances in the sensible world, they may greatly narrow the field of that experience, in their concentration upon some one, single, though perhaps very important interest in it, to which they give a false isolation or relief.

It was some such cramping, narrowing, costly preference of one part of his own nature, and of the nature of things, to another, that Marius seemed to have detected in himself, as also in his old masters in the Cyrenaic philosophy. If they did realise the μονόχρονος ἡδονή, as they said—the pleasure of the ideal *now*—if certain moments and spaces of their lives were high-pitched, passionately coloured, intent with sensation, and a kind of knowledge which, in its vivid clearness, was like sensation—if, now and then, they apprehended the world in its fulness, and had a vision, almost "beatific," of ideal personalities in life and art; yet, these moments were a very costly matter: they paid a great price for them, if we duly consider it, in a thousand possible sympathies, and things only to be enjoyed through sympathy, from which they detached themselves, in the mere intellectual pride of loyalty to a theory which would take nothing for granted, and assent to no hypothetical or approximate truths. If metaphysical acumen had cleared away the metaphysical pretension to know what *is*, that free place might be left for what *appears;* surely, the attractive aspects of morality and religion, as then popularly understood, might have ranked as at least φαντασίαι—observable, perhaps

amiable, appearances—among the rest. The Greek religion was then alive: then, even more than in its later day of dissolution, the higher view of it was possible, even for the philosopher. Its story made little or no demand for a reasoned or formal intellectual acceptance. A religion, which had grown through and through man's life, so strongly and quietly; which had meant so much for so many generations; expressing so much of their hopes, in forms so lovely and so familiar; a tradition so tranquillising, linked by such complex associations to man as he had been, and was—a religion like this, one would think, might have had its uses, even for a philosophic sceptic; without embarrassing him by any doubtful theory of its intellectual groundwork, or pushing him on to further conclusions, or in any way tarnishing that intellectual integrity, which will not suffer one, out of mere self-respect, to pass doubtful intellectual coin. But those beautiful gods, with the whole round of their beautiful service, the Cyrenaic school definitely renounced: and Euemerus, who has given his name to the coldest and thinnest of all phases of rationalism, was one of its accredited masters.

The Greek morality, again, with all its imperfections, was certainly a comely thing.—Yes! a harmony, a music, in men's ways, one might well hesitate to jar. The merely aesthetic sense might have had a legitimate satisfaction in the spectacle of that fair order of choice manners; in those attractive conven-

tions, enveloping, so gracefully, the whole of life; insuring some sweetness, some security at least against offence, in the intercourse of the world. The discreet master of Cyrene himself had been in all but entire practical sympathy with it. Beyond an obvious utility, it could claim, indeed, but custom—use-and-wont, as we say—for its sanction. But then, one of the advantages of that liberty of spirit among the Cyrenaics (in which through theory they had become dead to theory, so that all theory, as such, was really indifferent to them, and indeed nothing valuable but in its tangible ministration to life) was precisely this, that it gave them free play, in the use of things, as mere ministers, which, to the uninitiated, must be masters or nothing. Yet, how little the followers of Aristippus made of that whole comely system of manners or morals, then actually in possession of life, is shown by the bold practical consequence, which one of them maintained (with hard, self-opinionated adherence to his peculiar theory of values) in the not very amiable paradox that friendship and patriotism were things one could do without: while another—*Death's-advocate*, as he was called—helped so many to self-destruction, by his pessimistic eloquence on the evils of life, that his lecture-room was closed. That that was in the range of their consequences—that that was a possible, if remote, deduction from the premises of the discreet Aristippus—was surely an inconsistency in a thinker who professed above all things an economy of the moments of life; and such inconsis-

tency, surely a double fault, in a thinker who had started with a very high ideal of intellectual severity. Those old Cyrenaics felt their way, as it were in the dark, we may be sure, like other men in the ordinary transactions of life, beyond the narrow limits they drew of clear and absolutely legitimate knowledge; admitting what was not of immediate sensation, and drawing upon that "fantastic" future which might never come. A little more of such "walking by faith," a little more of reasonable "assent," and of that common sense by which eternal "Wisdom," it may be, "assists" the incomplete intelligence of the individual—and they might have profited by a hundred services to their culture, from Greek religion and Greek morality, as they actually were. The spectacle of their hard, isolated, tenacious hold on their own narrow apprehension, makes one think of a picture with no relief, no soft shadows or breadth of space, or of a drama without repose. Contrasted with the liberality of one like Socrates, their theory of practice, even at its best, has the narrowness—the fanatic narrowness—if, also, the intense force, of a "heresy."

Heresy, theologians are careful to explain, consists not so much in positive error, as in disproportion of truth; in the exaggeration of this or that side or aspect, of the truth, out of the proportion of faith: it being assumed that such exceptional apprehensions of special aspects of the faith, by individual minds, are really provided for in the great system of catholic

doctrine. Such a system—such a proportion of faith —is represented for us, in the moral order, by that body of moral ideas common to all Christian lands; which, in those lands, forms a sort of territory common to human society and the Christian church, and which is, in reality, the total product and effect of all the higher moral experience of many generations, and all their aspirations after a more perfect world: it expresses the moral judgment of the honest dead—a body so much more numerous than the living.

And the drift of the evolution of morals has certainly been to allow those theories, which, as I have said, may easily become heresies; theories which have, from time to time, expressed the finer, or the bolder, apprehensions of peculiar spirits—Bentham, Shelley, Carlyle, the old or the new Cyrenaics—theories, the motive of which is to bring special elements, or neglected elements it may be, of our common moral effort, into prominence, by explaining them in unusual terms, or in the terms of some non-moral interest in human life; so much influence, but only so much, as they can exercise, in proportion with that system or organisation of moral ideas, which, in Christian lands, are the common property of human society. And the moral development of the individual may well follow the tendency of that larger current, and permit its flights and heats, its *élans*, as the French say, only so much freedom of play as may be consistent with full sympathy with, and a full practical assent to, the moral preferences

of that "great majority," which exercises the authority of humanity; and is actually a vast force all around us. Harmonised, reduced to its true function, in this way, Cyrenaicism, old or new, with its ardent pursuit of beauty, might become, as I said, at the least a very salutary corrective, in a generation which has certainly not overvalued the aesthetic side of its duties, or even of its pleasures. I have been making use of theological terms; and there is another theological term which precisely expresses what I mean. Such or such a heroic proposal, say the theologians, is not a precept of the church, but a "counsel of perfection." Such counsels of perfection may become, by exaggeration or wilfulness, heresies; yet they define the special vocations, success in which earns the "special crown," in the case of those for whom they are really meant; and it is in this way that Cyrenaicism, with its worship of beauty—of the body—of physical beauty—might perform its legitimate moral function, as a "counsel of perfection," for the few.

For it was of perfection that Marius (to mount up to him again, from his intellectual heirs) had been really thinking, all the time: a narrow perfection it might be objected, the perfection of but one part of his whole nature—his capacities, namely, of feeling, of receiving exquisite physical impressions, of an imaginative sympathy—but still, a true perfection of those capacities, wrought out to their utmost degree, and admirable enough in its way. He is an econo-

mist: he hopes, by that "insight" of which the old Cyrenaics made so much, by a highly-trained skill in the apprehension of what the conditions of spiritual success really are, and the special circumstances of the occasion with which he has to deal—the special happinesses of his own nature—to make the most, in no mean or vulgar sense, of the few years of life; few, indeed, for the attainment of anything like general perfection! With the brevity of those years his mind is exceptionally impressed; and this purpose makes him no frivolous *dilettante*, but graver than other men: his scheme is not that of a trifler, but rather of one who gives a meaning of his own, but a quite real and sincere one, to those old words—*Let us work while it is day!* He has a strong apprehension, also, of the beauty of the visible things around him; their fading, momentary, graces and attractions. His own natural susceptibility in this direction, confirmed by experience, demands of him an almost exclusive preoccupation with the *aspects* of things; their aesthetic character, as it is called—their revelations to the eye and the imagination: not so much because the spectacle of these elements in them yields him the largest amount of enjoyment, as because to be occupied, in this way, with the aesthetic or imaginative side of things, is to be in real contact with those elements of his own nature, and of theirs, which, for him at least, are matters of the most real kind of apprehension. As other men concentrate themselves on truths of number, or on business, or it may be on the pleasures of appetite,

so he is wholly bent on living in that full stream of refined sensation; and in the prosecution of this love of beauty, he claims an entire personal liberty of heart and mind—liberty, above all, from conventional answers to first questions.

But, without him there is a venerable system of sentiment and ideas, widely extended in time and place, actually in a kind of impregnable possession of human life—a system, which, like some other great products of the conjoint efforts of human mind through many generations, is rich in the world's experience; so that, in attaching oneself to that, one lets in a great tide of that experience, and makes, as it were with a single step, a great experience of one's own; with a great, consequent increase to one's mind, of colour, variety, and relief, in the spectacle of men and things. The mere sense of belonging to a system—an imperial system or organisation—has, in itself, the expanding power of a great experience; as some have felt who have been admitted from narrower sects into the communion of the Roman church; or as the old Roman citizen felt. It is, we might fancy, like the coming into possession of a very widely spoken language, with a vast literature, which is also the speech of the people we have to live among.

Cyrenaic or Epicurean doctrine, then—the Cyrenaicism with which Marius had come to Rome, or our own new Cyrenaicism of the nineteenth century—does but need its proper complement. Refer it, as a

part to the whole, to that larger, well-adjusted system of the old morality, through which the better portion of mankind strive, in common, towards the realisation of a better world than the present—give it a *modus vivendi*, as lawyers say, with that common everyday morality, the power of which is continuous in human affairs—excise its antinomian usurpations; and the heresy becomes a counsel of perfection. Our Cyrenaic finds his special apprehension of the fact of life, amid all his own personal colour of mind and temper—finds himself again—though it be but as a single element in an imposing system, a wonderful harmony of principles, exerting a strange power to sustain—to carry him and his effort still onward to perfection, when, through one's inherent human weakness, his own peculiar source of energy fails him, or his own peculiar apprehension becomes obscured for a while.

A wonderful order, actually in possession of the world!—grown over it and into it, inextricably; penetrating into its laws, its very language, its mere habits of *decorum*, in a thousand half-conscious ways; yet still felt to be, in part, an unfulfilled ideal; and, as such, awakening hope, and an aim, which is identical with the one only consistent, aspiration of mankind! In the apprehension of that, just then, Marius seemed to have joined company again with his own old self; to have overtaken on the road the pilgrim who had come to Rome, with absolute sincerity, on the search for perfection. It defined not so much a change of practice, as of sympathy—a change, an

expansion, of sympathy. There was involved in it, certainly, a voluntary curtailing of his liberty, in concession to the actual manner, the distinctions and enactments of that great crowd of admirable spirits, who have elected so, and not otherwise, in their conduct of life; and who are not here to give one, so to term it, an "indulgence." But then, under the supposition of their frown, no roses would ever seem worth plucking again. The authority they exercised was like that of classic taste—an influence so subtle, yet so real, and which defines the loyalty of the scholar—or of some beautiful and venerable ritual, in which every observance has become spontaneous and almost mechanical, yet is found, the more carefully one considers it, to have a reasonable significance and a real history.

And Marius saw that he would be but an inconsistent Cyrenaic—mistaken in his estimate of values, of loss and gain, and untrue to the well-considered economy of life which he had brought to Rome with him—that some drops of the great cup would fall to the ground—if he did not make that concession, if he did but remain just there.

CHAPTER XVII.

MANY PROPHETS AND KINGS HAVE DESIRED TO SEE THE THINGS WHICH YE SEE.

THE enemy on the Danube was, indeed, but the vanguard of the mighty invading hosts of the fifth century. Illusively repressed just now, those confused movements along the northern boundary of the Empire were destined to unite triumphantly at last, in the barbarism, which, powerless to destroy the Christian church, was yet to suppress for a time the achieved culture of the pagan world: and with this lamentable result, that the kingdom of Christ grew up in a somewhat false alienation from the beauty and light of the kingdom of the natural man, developing a partly mistaken tradition concerning it, and an incapacity, as it might almost seem at times, for eventual reconciliation with it. Meantime, Italy had armed itself once more, in haste; and the imperial brothers set forth for the Alps.

Whatever misgiving the Roman people may have felt as to the leadership of the younger of them was unexpectedly set at rest; though with some temporary regret for the loss of what had been, after all,

a popular figure on the world's stage. Travelling fraternally in the same litter with Aurelius, Lucius Verus was struck with sudden and mysterious disease, and died as he hastened back to Rome. His death awoke a swarm of sinister rumours, to settle—on Lucilla, jealous, it was said, of Fabia her sister, perhaps of Faustina—on Faustina herself, who had accompanied the imperial progress, and was anxious now to hide a crime of her own—even on the elder brother, who, beforehand with the treasonable designs of his colleague, should have helped him at supper to a favourite morsel, cut with a knife poisoned ingeniously on one only of its sides. Aurelius, certainly, with unfeigned distress, his long irritations, so dutifully repressed or disguised, turning now into a single sentiment of regret for the human creature, carried the remains back to Rome, and demanded of the Senate a public funeral, with a decree for the *apotheôsis*, or canonisation, of the deceased.

For three days the body lay in state before the *Tribunal* in the Forum, enclosed in an open coffin of cedar-wood, on a bed of ivory and gold, in the centre of a sort of temporary chapel, representing the temple of *Venus Genetrix;* while armed soldiers watched around it, and choirs of chosen voices relieved each other in the chanting of hymns and monologues from the great tragedians. At the head of the couch were displayed the various personal decorations which had belonged to Verus in life. Like all the rest of Rome, Marius went to gaze on the face, which he had last

seen hardly disguised under the hood of a travelling-dress, as the wearer hurried, at nightfall, along one of the streets below the palace, on some amorous appointment. And unfamiliar as he still was with dead faces, he was taken by surprise, and touched beyond what he could have thought possible, by the piteous change there; even the skill of Galen having been not wholly successful in the process of embalming. It was as if a brother of his own were lying low before him, with that meek and helpless expression, which it would have been a sacrilege to treat rudely.

Meantime, in the centre of the *Campus Martius*, within the grove of poplars enclosing the space where the body of Augustus had been burnt, the great funeral pyre, stuffed with shavings of various aromatic woods, had been built up in many stages, separated from each other by a light entablature of woodwork, and abundantly adorned with tapestries, flowers, and images. Upon the top of this pyramidal, or flame-shaped structure, was placed the corpse, hidden now under a mountain of garlands and incense brought by the women, who from the first had had their fondness for the wanton graces of the deceased. The dead body was surmounted by a waxen effigy of great size, arrayed in the triumphal ornaments; and at last the centurions, whose office it was, approached with their torches to ignite the pile at its four corners, while the soldiers, in wild excitement, ran around it, casting into the flames the decorations they had received for acts of valour under his command.

It had been a really heroic order, spoiled a little, at the last moment, through the somewhat tawdry artifice, by which an eagle—not a very noble or youthful specimen of its kind—was made to take flight from the perishing remains; a court chamberlain, according to ancient etiquette, subsequently making official declaration, before the Senate, that the imperial genius had been seen in this way, escaping from the ashes. And Marius was present when the Fathers, duly certified of the fact, by "acclamation," muttering their judgment all together, in a kind of low, rhythmical chant, decreed—*cælum*—the privilege of divine rank, to the departed.

The actual gathering of the ashes in a white cere-cloth by the widowed Lucilla, when the last flicker had been extinguished by drops of wine; and the conveyance of them to the little cell, already populous, in the central mass of the sepulchre of Hadrian, still in all the splendour of its statues and colonnades, were a matter of private or domestic duty; after the due accomplishment of which Aurelius was at liberty to retire for a time into the privacy of his beloved apartments on the Palatine. And hither, not long afterwards, Marius was summoned a second time, to receive from the imperial hands the great pile of manuscripts it was to be his business to revise and arrange.

Just one year had passed since his first visit to the palace; and as he climbed the stairs to-day, the great cypresses rocked against the sunless sky, like living creatures in pain. He had to traverse a long

subterranean gallery, once a secret entrance to the imperial apartments, and in our own day, amid the ruin of almost all else around it, as smooth and fresh as if the carpets had but just been removed from the floor after the return of the emperor from the shows. It was here, on such an occasion, that the emperor Caligula, at the age of twenty-nine, had come by his end; his assassins gliding through it upon him, while he stayed yet a little while longer to watch the exercises of a party of noble youths at play. As Marius waited, a second time, in the little red room, in the house of the chief chamberlain, curious to look once more at its painted walls—the very place into which the assassins were said to have turned for concealment after the murder—he could all but see the figure, which, in its surrounding light and darkness, had always seemed to him perhaps the most melancholy in the whole history of Rome. He called to mind the greatness of that early promise and popularity—the stupefying height of irresponsible power, from which, after all, only men's viler side had been clearly visible—the incipient overthrow of reason—the irredeemable memory; and still, above all, the beautiful head in which the noble lines of the family of Augustus were united to, he knew not what expression of fineness and sensibility, not theirs, and for the like of which one must pass onward to the Antonines. A legitimate popular hatred was careful to destroy the semblance of it, wherever it could be found; but one bust, in dark bronze-like basalt of a

wonderful finish and style, preserved in the Museum of the Capitol, is still one of the very finest art-treasures of Rome. Had the very seal of empire upon those sombre brows, reflected to him from his mirror, suggested his mad attempts upon the liberty, the dignity of humanity—*O humanity! what hast thou done to me that I should so despise thee?*—And yet might not all that be indeed the true meaning of kingship, if the world would have one man to reign over it? that—or, some incredible, surely never to be realised, height of disinterestedness, in a king who should be the servant of all, quite at the other extreme of the practical dilemma involved in such a position. It was not till some time after his death that his body was decently interred by the sisters he had driven into exile. Fraternity of feeling had not been an invariable feature in the incidents of Roman story—one long *Vicus Sceleratus*, from its first dim foundation in a fraternal quarrel on the morrow of a common deliverance so touching—had not almost every step in it some gloomy memory of unnatural violence? Romans did well to fancy the traitress Tarpeia still "green in earth," and established on a throne, at the roots of the Capitoline rock. If in truth the religion of Rome was everywhere in it, like the perfume of the funeral incense still in the air Marius was breathing, so also was the memory of its crimes, prompted by a hypocritical cruelty, down to the erring, or not erring, vestal, calmly buried alive there, only eighty years ago, under Domitian.

It was with a sense of relief that Marius found himself in the presence of Aurelius, whose look and gesture of friendly intelligence, as he entered, made him smile at the gloomy train of his own thoughts just then, although since his first visit to the palace a great change had passed over it. The clear daylight found its way now into empty rooms. To raise funds for the war, Aurelius, his luxurious brother being now no more, had determined to sell by auction the accumulated treasures of the imperial household. The works of art, and the dainty furniture, had been removed, and were now "on view" in the Forum, to be the delight or dismay, for many weeks to come, of the large public of those who were curious in such things. In such wise had Aurelius come to that condition of philosophic detachment, which he had affected as a boy, when he had hardly been persuaded to wear warm clothing, and to sleep otherwise than on the bare floor. But, in the empty house, the man of mind, who had always made so much of the pleasures of philosophic contemplation, felt freer in thought than ever. He had been reading, with less self-reproach than usual, in the *Republic* of Plato, those passages which describe the life of the king-philosophers—like that of hired servants in their own house—who, possessed of the "gold undefiled" of intellectual vision, forego so cheerfully all other riches. It was one of his happy days; one of those rare days, when, almost with none of the effort otherwise so constant with him, his thoughts came rich and full,

converging in a mental view, as exhilarating to him as the prospect of some wide expanse of landscape to another man's bodily eye. He seemed to lie readier than was his wont to those suggestions, conveyed by philosophic reason to an alert imagination—suggestions of a possible open country, commencing just upon the verge where all actual experience leaves off, but which experience, one's own and not another's, may one day occupy. In fact, he was seeking strength for himself, in his own way, before he started for that ambiguous earthly warfare which was to occupy the rest of his life. "Ever remember this," he writes, "that a happy life depends not on *many* things—ἐν ὀλιγίστοις κεῖται." And to-day, committing himself with a steady effort of volition to the mere silence of the great empty apartments, he might be said to have escaped (according to Plato's promise to those who live closely with philosophy) from the evils of the world.

In his "conversations with himself" Marcus Aurelius speaks often of a *City on high*, of which all other cities beside are but single habitations. It was from him that Cornelius Fronto, in his late discourse, had borrowed the expression: and he certainly meant by it more than the whole commonwealth of Rome, even in any idealisation of it, however remote. Incorporate somehow with the actual city, whose goodly stones were lying beneath his gaze, it was also identical with that constitution of universal nature, by a devout contemplation of which it was possible for man to associate himself to the consciousness of God. It

was in that *new Rome* that he had taken up his rest for awhile on this day, deliberately feeding his thoughts on the better air of it, as another might have gone for mental renewal to a favourite villa.

"Men seek retirement in country-houses, at the seaside, on the mountains; and you have yourself as much fondness for such places as another. Still, there is no proof of culture in that; for the privilege is yours of retiring into yourself whensoever you please—into that little farm of one's own mind, where a silence so profound may be enjoyed."—That it could make these retreats, was a plain consequence of the prerogative, the kingship of the mind over its own conditions, its real, inherent liberty.—"It is in thy power to think as thou wilt: The essence of things is in thy thoughts about them: All is opinion—conception: No man can be hindered by another: What is outside thy circle of thought is nothing at all to it; hold to this, and you are safe: One thing is needful —to live close to the divine genius within thee, and minister thereto worthily."—And the first point in this true ministry, or culture, was to keep one's soul in a condition of pure indifference and calm. How continually had public claims, the claims of other persons, with their rough angularities of character, broken in upon him, the shepherd of the flock. But after all, he had at least this privilege he could not part with, of thinking as he would: and it was well, now and then, by an effort of will, to indulge it for a time, under an artificial and systematic direction.

The duty of thus making discreet, systematic use of the power of imaginative vision for the purposes of spiritual culture, "since the soul takes colour from its fantasies," is a point he has frequently insisted on.

The influence of these seasonable meditations—a symbol, or sacrament, because an intenser form, of the soul's own proper and natural life—would remain upon it, perhaps for many days. There were experiences he could not forget, intuitions beyond price, he had come by in this way, which were almost like the breaking of a physical light upon his mind; as the great Augustus was said to have seen a mysterious physical light, over there, upon the summit of the Capitol, where the altar of the Sibyl now stood. With a prayer, therefore, for inward quiet, and conformity to the divine reason, he read over some select passages from Plato, which bear upon the harmony of the reason, in all its forms, with itself—"Could there be *cosmos*, that wonderful, reasonable order, in him, and nothing but disorder in the world without?" It was from that question he had passed on to the vision, of system, of the reasonable order, not in nature, but in the condition of human affairs—the Celestial City, *Uranopolis*, *Callipolis*—in which, a consciousness of the divine will being everywhere realised, there would be, among other felicitous differences from this lower visible order, no more quite hopeless death, of men, or children, or of their affections. He had tried to-day, as never before, to make the most of this vision of a new Rome; to realise it as distinctly as he could;

and, as it were, to find his way along its streets, ere he went down into a world so irksomely different, to make his practical effort towards it, with a soul full of pity for men as they were. However distinct the mental image of that might have been to him, with the descent of one flight of steps from the palace into the market-place below, it would have retreated again, as if at touch of a magic wand, beyond the utmost verge of the horizon. But it had been, actually, in his clearest vision of it, a confused place, with but a recognisable tower or entry, here or there, and haunted by strange faces, whose new expression he, the great physiognomist, could by no means read. Plato, indeed, had been able to articulate, to see, in thought at least, his *ideal* city. But just because Aurelius had passed beyond Plato, in the scope of the philanthropy —the *Philadelphia*—he supposed there, he had been unable really to find his way about it. Ah! after all, according to Plato himself, all vision was but reminiscence, and this, his heart's desire, no place his soul had ever visited, in any region of the old world's achievements. He had but divined, by a kind of generosity of spirit, the void place, which another experience than his must fill.

Yet Marius noted the wonderful expression of peace, of quiet pleasure, on the countenance of Aurelius, as he received from him the rolls of fine clear manuscript, fancying the emperor had been really occupied with the famous prospect towards the Sabine and Alban hills, from those lofty windows.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"THE CEREMONY OF THE DART."

THE ideas of Stoicism, so precious to Marcus Aurelius, ideas of large generalisation (it must be repeated) have often induced, in those over whose intellects they have had real power, a chillness of heart. It was the distinction of Aurelius that he was capable of harmonising them with the charities, the amenities, one might almost say, of a humourist; as also with the popular religion and its many gods. Those vasty conceptions of the later Greek philosophy had in them, in truth, the germ of a sort of austerely opinionative "natural theology," as it is called; and how often has that led to a socinian dryness—a hard contempt of everything in religion, which touches the senses, or charms the imagination, or really concerns the affections. Aurelius had made his own the secret of passing, naturally, and with no violence to his thought, to and fro, between the richly coloured and romantic religion of those old gods who had been still human beings, and a somewhat fatalistic speculation upon the impassive, universal soul—circle

whose circumference was everywhere and centre nowhere—of which a series of purely logical necessities had evolved the formula. As in many another instance, those traditional pieties of the place and the hour had been derived by him from his mother—*παρὰ τῆς μητρὸς τὸ θεοσεβὲς*. Purified, as all such religion of concrete time and place needs to be purified, by a frequent confronting with the ideal of godhead, revealed by that innate theistic sense, in the possession of which Aurelius differed from the religious people around him, it was the ground of many a sociability with their simpler souls; and, for himself, a consolation, whenever the wings of his own soul flagged, in the trying atmosphere of intellectual speculation. A host of companions, guides, helpers, about him from of old time, "the very court and company of heaven," objects for him of personal reverence and affection—their supposed presence determined the character of much of his daily life, and might prove the last stay of his human nature at its weakest. "In every time and place," he had said, "it rests with thyself to use the event of the hour religiously: at all seasons worship the gods." And when he said "worship the gods," he did it as strenuously as all besides.

And yet, here again, how often must he have experienced disillusion, or even a revolt of feeling, at the contact with coarser natures to which his religious conclusions exposed him. At the beginning of the year A.D. 173 public anxiety was as great as ever;

and, as before, it brought people's superstition into unreserved play. For seven days the images of the old gods, and of some of the graver new ones, lay solemnly exposed in the open air, arrayed in all their ornaments, each one in his separate resting-place, amid lights and burning incense, while the crowd, following the imperial example, daily visited them; with offerings of flowers to this or that particular divinity, according to the devotion of each.

But supplementing these old, official observances, the very wildest gods had their share of worship, like some strange creatures with strange secrets startled abroad into the open day. The delirious sort of worship of which Marius was a spectator in the streets of Rome, during the seven days of the *Lectisternium*, reminded him, now and again, of an observation of Apuleius—it was "as if the presence of the gods did not do men good, but weakened or disordered them." Some jaded women of fashion, especially, found in certain oriental devotions, at once a relief for their tearful souls and an opportunity for personal display; preferring this or that mystery, chiefly because the attire it required suited their peculiar style of beauty. And one morning Marius encountered an extraordinary crimson object, borne along in a litter, through an excited crowd—the famous courtesan Benedicta, still fresh from the bath of blood to which she had submitted herself, sitting below the scaffold where the victims provided for the purpose were slaughtered by the priests. Even on

the last day of the solemnity, when the emperor himself performed one of the oldest ceremonies of the Roman religion, this fantastic piety asserted itself. There were victims enough, certainly, brought from the choice pastures of the Sabine mountains, and led around the city they were to die for, in almost continuous procession, covered with flowers and well-nigh worried to death before the time by the crowds pressing superstitiously to touch them. But some old-fashioned Romans, in these exceptional circumstances, demanded something more than that, in the way of a human sacrifice, after the old pattern; as when, not so long since, some Gauls or Greeks had been buried alive in the Forum. At least, human blood should be shed: and it was through a wild multitude of fanatics, cutting their flesh with whips and knives and ardently licking up the crimson stream, that the emperor repaired to the temple of Bellona, and in solemn symbolic act cast the blood-stained spear, or "dart," which was preserved there, towards the enemy's country—towards that unknown world of German homes, still warm, as some thought, under the faint northern twilight, with those innocent affections of which Romans had lost the sense; and the ruin of which (so much was clear, amid all doubts of abstract right or wrong on either side) was involved in what Aurelius was then preparing; with—Yes! the gods be thanked for that achievement of an invigorating philosophy!—almost with a light heart.

For, in truth, that departure, really so difficult, for

which Marcus Aurelius had needed to brace himself so strenuously, came to test the power of a long-studied theory of practice: and it was the development of this theory—literally, a *theôria*, a view, an intuition—of the most important facts, and still more important possibilities, concerning man in the world—that Marius now discovered, almost as if by accident, below the dry surface of the manuscripts entrusted to him. The great purple rolls contained—statistics, a general historical account of the writer's own time, and an exact diary: all alike, though in three different degrees of approach to the writer's own personal experience, laborious, formal, self-suppressing. All this was for the instruction of the public; and a part of it has, perhaps, found its way into the *Augustan Histories*. But it was for the especial guidance of his son Commodus that he had permitted himself to break out, here and there, into reflections upon what was passing, into conversations with the reader. And then, as if put off his guard in that way, there had escaped into the heavy statistical matter, of which the main portion was composed, morsels of his conversations with himself. It was the romance of a soul (to be traced only in hints, wayside notes, quotations from older masters) as it were in lifelong, and often baffled search after some vanished or elusive golden fleece, or Hesperidean fruit-trees, or some mysterious light of doctrine, ever retreating before him. A man, he had seemed to Marius from the first, of two lives, as we say. Of what nature, he had wondered some-

times, as, for instance, when he had interrupted his musings in the empty palace, might be that placid inward guest or inhabitant, who from amid the preoccupations of the man of practical affairs looked out surprised at the things and faces about it. Here, under the tame surface of a would-be life of business, Marius discovered, welcoming a brother, the spontaneous, irrepressible self-revelation of a soul as delicate as his own—a soul for which conversation with itself was a necessity of existence. Marius had always suspected that the feeling of such necessity was a peculiarity of his. Here, certainly, was another, in this respect like himself: and again he seemed to detect the advent of some new, or changed spirit into the world, mystic, and inward, and very different from that wholly external and objective habit of life, with which the old classic soul had satisfied itself: and his purely literary curiosity was greatly stimulated by this example of a book of self-portraiture. It was really the position of the modern essayist—creature of efforts rather than achievements, in the matter of apprehending truth—but at least conscious of lights by the way, which he must needs acknowledge. What seemed to underlie it was the desire to make the most of every outward or inward experience, to perpetuate and display what was so fleeting, in a kind of instinctive, pathetic protest against the imperial writer's own theory—that theory of the *perpetual flux* of all things—from of old so plausible to Marius.

Besides, there was a special doctrinal, or moral

significance in the making of such conversation with oneself at all. The reasonable spark, the *Logos* in man, is common to him with the gods—κοινός αὐτῷ πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς—*cum diis communis*. That might seem but the truism of certain schools of philosophy: in Aurelius it was clearly an original and lively apprehension. There could be no inward conversation with oneself like that, unless there were indeed some one aware of our actual feelings and thoughts, pleased or displeased at one's disposition of oneself. Fronto too, the learned professor, could enounce that proposition of the reasonable community between men and God, in many different ways. But then, he was a cheerful man, and Aurelius a singularly sad one; and what to Fronto was but a doctrine, or a mere motive of rhetoric, was to the other a consolation. He walks and talks, for a spiritual refreshment, without which he would faint by the way, with what to the other is but a matter of philosophic eloquence.

In performing those public religious acts, Marcus Aurelius had ever seemed like one taking his part in some high, real, process, a real thing done, with more than the actually visible assistants about him. Here, in a hundred marginal flowers of feeling and language, happy new phrases of his own like the impromptus of a real conversation, or those quotations from other older masters of the inward life, taking new significance from the chances of such intercourse, was the record of his communion with that eternal reason, which was also his own proper self—with the in-

telligible companion, whose tabernacle was in the intelligence of men;—the journal of his daily commerce with that.

Chance or Providence! Chance: or Wisdom—one with nature and man; reaching from end to end, through all time and all existence, orderly disposing all things, according to fixed periods—as he describes it, in terms very like certain well-known words of the book of *Wisdom*—those are the "fenced opposites," of the speculative dilemma, the tragic *embarras*, of which Aurelius cannot too often remind himself as the summary of man's situation in the world. If there be such a provident soul "behind the veil," truly, even to him, even in the most intimate of those conversations, it has never yet spoken with any quite irresistible assertion of its presence. Yet that speculative choice, as he has found it, is on the whole a matter of will—"'Tis in thy power," again, here too, "to think as thou wilt." And for his part he has made his choice and is true to it. "To the better of two things, if thou findest that, turn with thy whole heart: eat and drink ever of the best before thee." "Wisdom," says that other disciple of the *Sapiential* philosophy, "hath mingled her wine, she hath also prepared herself a table."—Τοῦ ἀριστοῦ ἀπόλαυε—"partake ever of Her best!" And what Marius, peeping now very closely upon the intimacies of that singular mind, found a thing actually pathetic and affecting, was the manner of his bearing as in the presence of this supposed guest; so elusive, so jealous

of any broad manifestation of himself, so taxing to one's faith, never allowing one to lean frankly upon him and be wholly at rest. Only, he would do his own part, at least, in maintaining the constant fitness, the quiet and sweetness of the guest-chamber. Seeming to vary with the intellectual fortune of the hour, from being the plainest account of experience, to a sheer fantasy, believed almost because it was impossible,—that one hope was, at all events, sufficient to make men's common pleasures, and common ambition, above all their commonest vices, seem very petty indeed, too petty to know of; and bred in him a kind of *magnificence* of character, in the old Greek sense of the term; a temper incompatible with any merely plausible advocacy of his convictions, or merely superficial thoughts about anything whatever, or talk about other people, or speculation as to what was passing in their so visibly little souls, or much talk of any kind, however clever or graceful. *A soul thus disposed had already entered into the better life—was indeed in some sort a priest, a minister of the gods.* Hence, his constant circumspection; a close watching of his soul, almost unique in the ancient world.—*Before all things examine into thyself: strive to be at home with thyself!*—Marius a sympathetic witness of all that, might almost seem to have foreseen monasticism itself, in the prophetic future. With this mystic companion he had gone a step onward, out of the merely objective pagan world. Here was already a master in that craft of self-direction, which was then coming to play so large

a part in the human mind, at the prompting of the Christian church.

Yet it was in truth a very melancholy service, a service upon which one must needs move about, solemn, serious, depressed: with the hushed footsteps of people who move about a house of mourning where a dead body is lying. That was an impression which occurred to Marius, again and again, as he read, with the growing sense of some profound dissidence from his author. By certain, quite traceable links of association, he was reminded, in spite of the moral beauty of the philosophic emperor's ideas, how he had sat, essentially unconcerned, at the gladiatorial shows. For, actually, his contemplations had made him of a sad heart; inducing in him that sadness—*Tristitia*—which even monkish moralists have held to be of the nature of mortal sin, akin to the mortal sin of—*Desidia*—Inactivity or Sloth. Resignation, a sombre resignation, a sad heart, patient bearing of the burden of a sad heart—Yes! that was in the situation of an honest thinker upon the world. Only, here there was too much of a tame acquiescence in it. And there could be no true *Théodicée* in that; no real accommodation of the world as it is, to the divine pattern of the *Logos* over against it. It amounted to a tolerance of evil.

The soul of good, though it moveth upon a way thou canst but little understand, yet prospereth on the journey:
If thou sufferest nought contrary to nature, there can be nought of evil with thee there:

If thou hast done anything in harmony with that reason in which men are communicant with the gods, there also can be nought of evil with thee—nothing to be afraid of:
Whatever is, is right; as from the hand of one dispensing to every man according to his desert:
If reason fulfil its part in things, what more dost thou require
Dost thou take it ill that thy stature is but of four cubits?
That which happeneth to each of us is for the profit of the whole:
The profit of the whole, that was sufficient!

Those were some of the links in a train of thought really generous. Only, actually, its forced and yet too facile optimism, refusing to see evil anywhere, had no secret of genuine cheerfulness in it; it left a weight upon the spirits. No! with that weight unlifted, there could indeed be no genuine *Théodicée*, no real justification of the ways of Heaven to man. "Let thine air be cheerful," he had said; and, with an effort, did at times himself attain to that serenity of aspect, which surely ought to accompany, as their outward flower and favour, assumptions like those. Still, what in Aurelius was a passing expression, was in Cornelius (Marius could but note the contrast) nature, and a veritable physiognomy. It was in fact, we may say, nothing less than the joy which Dante apprehended in the blessed spirits of the perfect; the outward expression of which, like a physical light upon human faces, from the land which is very far off, we may trace from Giotto, and even earlier, to its consummation in the purer and better work of Raffaelle,—the serenity, the durable cheerfulness, the blitheness of those who had been indeed delivered

from death, of which the utmost degree of that famed Greek blitheness or *Heiterkeit* is but a transitory gleam, as in careless and wholly superficial youth. And yet, in Cornelius, it was certainly united with the bold recognition of evil as a fact in the world; as real as an aching in the head or heart, which one instinctively desires to have cured; an enemy with whom no terms could be made, visible, hatefully visible, in a thousand forms—in the apparent wasting of men's gifts in an early, or even in a late grave; in the death, as such, of men, and even of animals; in the disease and pain of the body.

And there was another point of dissidence between Aurelius and his reader.—The philosophic Aurelius was a despiser of the body. Since it is "the peculiar privilege of reason to move within herself, and to be proof against corporeal impressions, suffering neither sensation nor passion, both of which are of animal and inferior quality, to break in upon her;" it must follow that the true aim of the spirit will be to treat the body—ὁ σωματικὸς νεκρός—ever a carcase rather than a companion—as a thing really dead, a corpse; and actually to promote its dissolution. And here again, in opposition to an inhumanity like this, presenting itself to that young reader as nothing less than a kind of sin against nature, the person of Cornelius sanctioned or justified the delight Marius had always had in the body; at first, as but one of the consequences of his material or sensualistic philosophy. To Cornelius, the body of man was unmis-

takably, as a later seer terms it, the one temple in the world ("we touch Heaven when we lay our hand upon a human body"), and the proper object of a sort of worship, or sacred service, in which the very finest gold might have its seemliness and due symbolic use—Ah! and of what awe-stricken pity or reverence also, in its dejection, down even to the perishing white bones of the poor man's grave!

Some flaw in vision, thought Marius, must be involved in the philosopher's contempt for it—some disease in thought, or moral dulness; leading logically to what seemed to him the strangest of all the emperor's inhumanities, the humour of the suicide; for which there was just then, indeed, a sort of *mania* in the world. "'Tis part of the business of life," he read, "to lose it handsomely"—On due occasion, "one might give life the slip"—The mental and moral powers might flag with one; and then it were a fair question, precisely, whether the time for taking leave had not come—"Thou canst leave this prison when thou wilt. Go forth boldly!"—Just there, in the mere capacity to entertain that question at all, there was what Marius, whose heart must always leap up in loyal gratitude for the mere, physical sunshine, if for nothing else, touching him as it touched the flies in the air, could not away with. In that, surely, was the sign of some distortion in the natural power of apprehension. It was the attitude, the melancholy intellectual attitude, of one who might be greatly mistaken in things—who might make the greatest of mistakes.

A heart that could forget itself in the misfortune, and even the weakness of others:—of that, Marius had certainly found the trace, as a confidant of the emperor's conversations with himself, in spite of those jarring inhumanities, his pretension to a stoical indifference, and the many difficulties of his manner of writing. He found it again not long afterwards; in still stronger evidence, in this way. As he read one morning early, there slipped from the rolls of manuscript a sealed letter with the emperor's superscription, which might well be of importance, and he felt bound to deliver it at once in person; Aurelius being then absent from Rome in one of his favourite retreats, at Præneste, taking a few days of quiet with his young children, before his departure for the war. A long day passed as Marius crossed the *Campagna* on horseback, pleased by the random autumn lights bringing out in the distance the sheep at pasture, the shepherds in their picturesque dress, the golden elms, tower and villa: and it was long after dark that he mounted the steep street of the little hill-town to the imperial residence. He was struck by an odd mixture of stillness and excitement about the place. Lights burned at the windows. It seemed that numerous visitors were within, for the courtyard was crowded with litters and horses in waiting. For the moment, indeed, all larger cares, even the cares of war, of late so heavy a pressure, had been forgotten in what was passing with the little Annius Verus; who for his part had forgotten his toys, and

had been lying all day across the knees of his mother, as a mere child's ear-ache grew rapidly to an alarming sickness with great manifest agony, only suspended a little, from time to time, as he passed from very weariness into a few minutes of unconsciousness. The country surgeon called in, had removed the imposthume with the knife. There had been a great effort to bear this operation, for the terrified child, hardly persuaded to submit himself, when his pain was at its worst, and even more for the parents. At last, amid a crowd of pupils pressing in with him, as the custom was, to watch the proceedings in the sick-room, the great Galen had arrived, only to pronounce the thing done visibly useless, the patient now fainting into longer intervals of delirium. And it was just then, through the pressure of the departing crowd, that Marius was forced into being privy to a grief, the desolate face of which went deep into his memory, as he saw the emperor carry the child away —quite conscious now, but with a touching expression of helplessness and defeat upon it—pressed closely to his bosom, as if yearning just then for one thing only, to be united, to be absolutely one with it, in its obscure distress.

CHAPTER XIX.

PARATUM COR MEUM, DEUS! PARATUM COR MEUM.

THE emperor required only that the Senate should decree the erection of images, memorial of the dead child; that a golden image of him should be carried, with the other images, in the great procession of the *Circus*, and that his name should be inserted in the Hymn of the Salian Priests: and so, stifling private grief, without further delay set forth for the war.

True kingship, as Plato, the old master of Aurelius, had understood it, was essentially of the nature of a service.—If so be, you can discover a mode of life more desirable than the being a king, for those who shall be kings; then, the true Ideal of the State will become a possibility; and not otherwise. And if a life of Beatific Vision be indeed possible, if philosophy really concludes in an ecstasy affording its full fruition to the entire nature of man; then, for certain elect souls at least, a mode of life will have been discovered more desirable than being a king. By love or fear you might induce such an one to forego his privilege; to take upon him the distasteful

task of governing other men, or even of leading them to victory in battle: and by the very conditions of its tenure, his dominion would be wholly a ministry to others; he would have taken upon him "the form of a servant;" he would be reigning for the well-being of others, not for himself. The true king, the rightful king, would be Saint Lewis, exiling himself from the better land and its perfected company—so real a thing to him, as real and definite as the pictured pages of his psalter—to arbitrate, or to take part in, men's quarrels about the transitory *appearances* of things. In a lower degree—lower, in proportion as the highest Platonic dream is lower than any Christian vision—the true king would be Marcus Aurelius, drawn from the meditation of books, to be the leader of the Roman people in peace, and still more, in war.

To Aurelius, certainly, the philosophic mood, the visions, however dim, which this mood brought with it, were pleasant enough, together with those endearments of home, to make his public rule nothing less than a sacrifice of himself according to Plato's requirements, now consummated in his setting forth to the campaign on the Danube. That it was such a sacrifice was to Marius a visible fact, as he saw him ceremoniously lifted into the saddle amid all the pageantry of an imperial departure, but with the air less of a triumphant and self-willed leader than of one in some way or other defeated. Through the fortunes of the subsequent years, passing and repassing so inexplic-

ably from side to side, the rumours of which reached him amid his own quiet studies, Marius seemed always to see that central image, with its habitual hue of dejection grown now to an expression of positive suffering; all the stranger from its contrast with the magnificent armour worn by the emperor on that occasion, as it had been worn by his predecessor Hadrian.

Totus et argento contextus et auro—

clothed in its gold and silver, dainty as that old divinely constructed armour of which Homer speaks, but without its miraculous lightsomeness—he looked out baffled, moribund, labouring, like a comfortless shadow taking part in some shadowy reproduction of the labours of a Hercules through those mist-laden Northern confines of the civilised world. It was as if the familiar soul which had been so friendly disposed towards him were actually departed to Hades; and when he read his *Conversations* afterwards, though he did not materially change his judgment of them, it was nevertheless with the allowance we make for the dead. The memory of that suffering image, while it certainly deepened his adhesion to what he could accept in those remains of Aurelius, added a strange pathos to what must seem the writer's mistakes. What, after all, had been the meaning of that incident, accepted as so fortunate an omen long ago, when the Prince, then a little child much younger than was usual, had stood in ceremony among the priests of Mars and flung his crown of flowers with the rest at

the sacred image reclining on the *Pulvinar*? The other crowns lodged themselves here or there: when, Lo! the crown thrown by Aurelius, the youngest of them, alighted upon the very brows of the god, as if placed there by a careful hand! He was still young, again, when on the day of his adoption by Antoninus Pius he saw himself in a dream, with as it were shoulders of ivory, like the images of the gods, and found them more capable than shoulders of flesh. Yet he was now well-nigh fifty years of age, and with two-thirds of life behind him was setting out upon a labour which was to fill the remainder of it with anxiety—a labour for which he had perhaps no capacity, certainly no taste.

That ancient suit of armour was almost the only object which Aurelius now possessed out of all those much cherished articles of *vertu* collected by the Cæsars, making the imperial residence like a magnificent museum. For not men only were needed for the war, so that it was necessary, to the great disgust alike of timid persons and of the lovers of sport, to arm the gladiators: money also was lacking. Accordingly, at the sole motion of Aurelius himself, unwilling that the public burden should be further increased, especially on the part of the poor, the whole of the imperial ornaments and furniture, a sumptuous collection of gems formed by Hadrian, with many works of the most famous painters and sculptors, even the precious ornaments of the imperial chapel or *Lararium*, and the wardrobe of the empress

Faustina, who seems to have borne the loss without a murmur, were exposed for public auction. "These treasures," said Aurelius, "like all else that I possess, belong by right to the Senate and people." Was it not a characteristic of the true kings in Plato that they had in their houses nothing of their own? *Connoisseurs* had a keen delight in the mere reading of the *Prætor's* list of the property for sale. For two months the learned in these matters were daily occupied in the appraising of the embroidered hangings, the choice articles of personal use selected for preservation by each succeeding age, the great outlandish pearls from Hadrian's favourite cabinet, the marvellous plate lying safe behind the pretty iron wickerwork of the shops in the goldsmiths' quarter. Meantime ordinary persons might inspect with interest objects which had been as daily companions to people so far above and remote from them—things so fine also in material and workmanship as to seem, with their antique and delicate air, a worthy survival of the grand bygone eras—like select thoughts or utterances, embodying the very spirit of the vanished past. The town became more pensive than ever over old fashions.

The pleasurable excitement of this last act of preparation for the great war being over, all Rome seemed to settle down into a singular quiet, likely to last long, as though bent only on watching from afar the languid, somewhat uneventful course of the contest itself. Marius took advantage of it as an oppor-

tunity for still closer study than of old; only now and then going out to one of his favourite spots on the Alban or the Sabine hills, for a quiet even greater than that of Rome, in the country air. On one of those occasions, as if by the favour of an invisible power, withdrawing some unsuspected cause of oppression from around him, he enjoyed a quite unusual sense of self-possession—the possession of his own best and happiest self. After some gloomy thoughts overnight, he had awoke in the morning sunlight, full, in his entire refreshment, of that almost religious appreciation of sleep, the graciousness of its influence on men's spirits, which had made the old Greeks conceive of it as a god. It was like one of those old joyful wakings of childhood, now becoming rarer and rarer with him, and looked back upon with much regret as a measure of advancing age. In fact, the last bequest of this serene sleep had been a dream, in which, as once before, he had overheard those he loved best pronouncing his name very pleasantly, as they passed through the rich sunlight and shadow of a summer morning, along the pavement of a city —Ah! fairer far than Rome! In a moment, as he awoke, a dejection which of late had settled heavily upon him was lifted away as if by the motion of physical air.

That flawless serenity, better than the most pleasurable excitement, but so easily ruffled by chance collisions even with things or persons, he had begun to value as the greatest treasure in life, was to be

wholly his to-day, he thought, as he rode towards Tibur, under the early sunshine; the old yellow marble of its villas glittering all the way before him on the hillside. Why might he not hold that serenity ever at command?—he asked himself—expert, as he had at last come to be, in the art to setting the house of his thoughts in order. "'Tis in thy power to think as thou wilt:" he repeated to himself—most serviceable of all the lessons enforced on him by those imperial *conversations*/—"'Tis in thy power to think as thou wilt." And were those cheerful, sociable beliefs he had there seen so much of (that bold selection, for instance, of the hypothesis of an eternal friend to man, just hidden behind the veil of a mechanical and material order, yet only just behind it and ready perhaps even now to break through), after all, perhaps, really a matter of choice, and dependent on a deliberate act of volition on his part? Were they doctrines one might take for granted, generously take for granted—and led along by them, at first as but well-defined hopes, grow at last into the corresponding intellectual certitude? "It is the truth I seek"—he had read—"the truth, by which no one," gray and depressing as it might seem, "was ever really injured." And yet, on the other hand, the imperial wayfarer, he had been able to go along with so far on his pilgrimage, let fall many things concerning the practicability of a forced, constructive, methodical assent to principles or dogmas, which one could not do without. Were there (as the expression

ἀναγκαῖα—which one could not do without—seemed to hint) opinions, without which life itself was almost impossible, and which had their sufficient ground of evidence in that fact? Experience certainly taught that, as with regard to the sensible world he could attend or not, almost at will, to this or that colour, this or that train of sounds, amid the whole tumult of sound and colour, so it was also, for a well-trained intelligence, in regard to the hum of voices which besiege the inward no less than the outward ear. Might it be not otherwise with those various and competing, permissible hypotheses, which, in that open field for hypothesis—one's own actual ignorance of the origin and tendency of our being—present themselves so importunately, some of them with so emphatic a reiteration, through all the mental changes of the various ages; present themselves as instinctive reflections of the facts of experience? Might the Will itself be an organ of knowledge, of vision?

On this day, certainly, no mysterious light, no irresistibly leading hand from afar reached him; only, the peculiarly tranquillising influence with which it had begun increased steadily upon him, in a manner with which, as he conceived according to his habit, the aspects of the place he was then visiting had something to do. The air there, air which it was fancied had the singular property of preserving or restoring the whiteness of ivory, was pure and thin. An even veil of lawn-like white cloud had now drawn over the sky; and under its broad, shadowless light

every tone and hue of time came out upon the old yellow temples and houses, seeming continuous with the rocks they rose from. Some half-conscious motive of poetic grace would appear to have determined their grouping; partly resisting, partly going along with the natural wildness and harshness of the place, its floods and precipices. An air of immense age possessed, above all, the vegetation around—a world of evergreen trees—the olives especially (older than how many generations of men's lives!) fretted and twisted by the combining forces of life and death, into every conceivable caprice of form. In the windless weather all seemed to be listening to the roar of the immemorial waterfall, plunging down so unassociably among these human habitations, and with a motion so unchanging from age to age as to count, even in this time-worn place, as an image of unalterable rest. Yet the clear sky all but broke, to let through the ray which was silently quickening everything in the late February afternoon, and the unseen violet refined itself through the air. It was as if the spirit of life in nature were but withholding any too precipitate revelation of itself, in its slow, wise, maturing work.

Through some accident to the trappings of his horse at the inn where he rested, Marius had an unexpected delay. He sat down in one of those olive-gardens, and, all within and around him turning still to reverie, the course of his own life hitherto seemed to retire from him into some other world,

distinct from the point at which he was now placed to watch it, like the distant road below, over which he had travelled that morning across the Campagna. Through a dreamy land he could see himself moving, as if in another life, detached from the present, and like another person, through all his fortunes and misfortunes, passing from point to point, weeping or delighted, escaping from various dangers. And the vision brought, first of all, a forcible impulse of nothing else than gratitude, as if he must actually look round for some one to share his joy with—to whom he might tell of it, as a relief. Companionship, indeed, familiarity with souls noble and gifted, or at least sweet to him, had been, through this and that long space of it, the chief delight of the journey: and was it only the general sense and residue of that familiarity, diffused through his memories, which, in a while, suggested the question whether there had not been—besides Flavian, besides Cornelius even, and through the solitude which in spite of ardent friendship he had perhaps loved best of all things—a companion, a perpetual companion, ever at his side throughout; doubling his pleasure in the roses by the way, recipient of his depression or peevishness, above all, as of old, of his grateful recognition of the fact that he himself was there at all? Would not all have faded away altogether, had he been left for one moment really alone in it? In his deepest apparent solitude there had been rich entertainment. It was as if there were not one but two wayfarers, side by

side, visible there across the plain, as he indulged his fancy. A bird came and sang among the wattled hedge-roses: an animal feeding crept nearer: the child who kept it was gazing quietly: and the scene and the hour still conspiring, he passed from that mere fantasy of a self not himself, beside him in his coming and going, to those divinations of a breath of the spirit, at work in all things, of which there had been glimpses for him from time to time in his old philosophic readings—in Plato, in Aristotle, and others—last but not least, in Aurelius. Through one reflection upon another, he passed from those instinctive feelings or divinations, to the thoughts which articulate and give them logical consistency, and formulate at last, out of our experiences of our own and the world's life, that reasonable *Ideal*, which the Old Testament calls the *Creator*, and the Greek philosophers *Eternal Reason*, and the New Testament the *Father of Men*—as one builds up from act and word and expression of the friend actually visible at one's side, an ideal of the spirit within him.

In this peculiar and privileged hour, his body, as he could recognise, although just then, in the whole sum of its capacities, so entirely *possessed* by him—nay! by some mysterious intimacy, actually his very self—was yet determined by a vast system of material influences external to it, a thousand combining elements from earth and sky, in the currents of the air, on that bland afternoon. Its powers of apprehension were but susceptibilities to influence. Its perfection

of capacity might be said to lie in this, that it surrendered itself impassively, like a leaf on the wind, to the motions of the great stream of material energies outside itself. Might not the intellectual being also, which was still more intimately himself, after that analogy of the bodily life, be but a moment, an impulse or series of impulses, belonging to an intellectual system without him, diffusing itself through all time and place—that great stream of spiritual energy, of which his own imperfect thoughts, yesterday or to-day, were the remote, and therefore imperfect, pulsations. It was the hypothesis (boldest, yet in reality most conceivable of all hypotheses) which had dawned on the contemplations of the two opposed great masters of the old Greek thought, alike:—the *World of Ideas*, existent only in and by their being known, as Plato conceived; the *creative, incorruptible, informing Mind*, supposed by Aristotle, so sober-minded, yet in this matter left, after all, something of a mystic. Might not that whole material world, then playing so masterfully upon his bodily organisation, the very scene around him, the immemorial rocks, the carved marble, the rushing water, be themselves but reflections in, or a creation of, that perpetual mind, wherein he too became conscious, for an hour, a day, or for so many years? Upon what other hypothesis could he so well understand the persistency of all these things for his own intermittent consciousness of them, for the intermittent consciousness of so many generations, fleeting away

one after another? It was easier to conceive of the material fabric of the world around him as but an element in a world of thought—as a thought in a mind—than of mind as an element, or accident, or passing condition, in a material order; because mind was really nearer to himself: it was an explanation of what was less known by what was known better. Just then, the merely material world, so often like a heavy wall about him, seemed the unreal thing, and to be breaking away all around; and he felt a quiet hope and joy in the dawning of this doctrine upon him as an actually credible opinion: it was like the dawning of day over a vast prospect with the "new city" in it. That divine companion figured no longer as only an occasional wayfarer beside him, but as the unfailing "assistant," without whose inspiration and concurrence he could not breathe or see, instrumenting his bodily senses, rounding and supporting his imperfect thoughts. How often had the recollection of their transitoriness spoiled his most natural pleasures in life, actually confusing his sense of them by a suggestion of failure and death in everything! How had he longed, sometimes, that there were indeed one to whose memory he could commit his own most fortunate moments, his admiration and love, nay! the very sorrows of which he could not bear quite to lose the sense—one, strong to retain them even should he forget, in whose abler consciousness they might remain present as real things still, over and above that mere quickening of

capacity which was all that remained of them in himself! And he had apprehended to-day, in the special clearness of one privileged hour, that in which the experiences he most valued might as it were take refuge—birds of passage as they were for himself, in and by himself, soon out of sight or with broken wing; yet not really lost, after all, on their way to the enduring light, in which the fair hours of life would present themselves as living creatures for ever before the perpetual observer. And again, that sense of companionship, of a person beside him, evoked the faculty of conscience—of conscience, as of old when he had been at his best—in the form not of fear, nor of self-reproach even, but of a certain lively gratitude.

Himself—his ideas and sensations—never fell again precisely into focus as on that day, yet he was the richer by its experience. But for once to have come into subjection to that peculiar mood, to have felt the train of reflections which belong to it really forcible and conclusive—to have been led by them to a conclusion—to have apprehended the *Great Ideal*, so palpably that it defined a personal gratitude and the sense of a friendly hand laid upon him amid the shadows of the world, made this one particular day among all days a space marked in life and for ever recognisable. It gave him a definite and ascertained measure of his moral or intellectual need, of what his soul really demanded from the powers, whatever they might be, which had brought him, as he was, into the world at all. And, again, would he be faithful to

himself, to his own habits and leading suppositions, if he did but remain just there? Must not all the rest of his life be a seeking after the equivalent of that reasonable Ideal, among so-called actual things —a gathering up of every trace and note of it, here or there, which actual experience might present to him?

PART THE FOURTH.

CHAPTER XX.

TWO CURIOUS HOUSES.

I. GUESTS.

"Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions."

A NATURE like that of Marius, composed, in about equal parts, of instincts almost physical, and of slowly accumulated intellectual judgments, was perhaps even less susceptible than other men's characters of essential change. And yet the experience of that fortunate hour, seeming to gather into one central act of vision all the deeper impressions his mind had ever received upon it, did not leave him quite as he had been: for his mental view, at least, it changed measurably the world about him, of which he was still indeed a curious spectator, but which looked further off, was weaker in its hold, and, in a sense, less real to him, than ever. It was as if he viewed it, mentally, through a diminishing glass. And the permanency of this change he could note, some years later, when it happened that he was a guest at a feast, in which the various exciting elements of Roman life, its physical and

intellectual accomplishments, its frivolity and far-fetched elegancies, its strange, mystic essays after the unseen, were elaborately combined. The great Apuleius, the poetic ideal of his boyhood, had come to Rome—was now visiting Tusculum, at the house of their common friend, a certain aristocratic poet who loved every sort of superiorities: and it was to a supper-party given in his honour that Marius had been invited.

It was with a feeling of half-humorous concession to his own early boyish hero-worship, and with some sense of superiority in himself, as he saw his old curiosity grown now almost to indifference, with a truer measure of its object when it was on the point of satisfaction at last, that he mounted to the little town on the hillside, the streets of which were broad flights of easy steps, gathered round a single great house below Cicero's villa on the heights, now in ruins and "haunted." There was a touch of weirdness in the circumstance that it was in this romantic place he had been bidden to meet the writer who had come to seem almost like one of the personages in his own fiction. Through the tall openings of the stair-cased streets, up which, here and there, the cattle were going home slowly from the pastures below, the Alban heights, between the great walls of the ancient houses, seemed close upon him—a vaporous screen of dun violet against the setting sun—with those waves of surpassing softness in their boundary line, characterising them as volcanic hills. The coolness of the little

brown market-place, for the sake of which even the working people were leaving the plain, in long file through the olive-gardens, to pass the night, was grateful, after the heats of Rome. Those wild country figures, clad in every kind of fantastic patchwork, stained by wind and weather fortunately enough for the eye, under that significant light, inclined him to poetry. And it was a very delicate poetry of its kind, which seemed to enfold him, as passing into the poet's house he turned to glance for a moment towards the height above; whereupon, the numerous cascades of the precipitous garden of the villa, framed in the doorway of the hall, fell into a harmless picture, in its place among the pictures within, and hardly more real than they; a landscape-piece, in which the power of water—plunging into what unseen depths! —done to the life, was pleasant, and without its natural terrors.

At the further end of this bland apartment, fragrant with the rare woods of the old, inlaid panelling, the falling of aromatic oil from the ready-lighted lamps, the iris-root clinging to the dresses of the guests, as with the odours of the altars of the gods, the supper-table was spread, in all the daintiness characteristic of the agreeable *petit maître*, who entertained. He was already most carefully dressed; but, like Martial's Stella, perhaps consciously, meant to change his attire once and again during the banquet; in the last instance, for an ancient vesture (object of much rivalry among the young men of fashion, at that great sale of

the imperial wardrobes), a toga, of altogether lost hue and texture. He wore it with the grace becoming the leader of a thrilling movement then on foot for the restoration of that disused garment, in which, laying aside the customary evening dress, all the visitors were requested to appear, setting off the dainty sinuosities and well-disposed "golden ways" of its folds, with harmoniously tinted flowers. The opulent sunset, blending pleasantly with artificial light, fell past the quiet ancestral effigies of old consular dignitaries, across the wide floor strewn with sawdust of sandal-wood, and lost itself in the heap of cool coronals, lying ready for the foreheads of the guests on a sideboard of old citron-wood. The crystal cups darkened with old wine, the hues of the early autumn fruit—mulberries, pomegranates, and grapes that had long been hanging under careful protection upon the vines, were almost as much a feast for the eye, as the dusky fires of the rare twelve-petalled roses. A favourite animal, white as snow, brought by one of the visitors, purred its way gracefully among the wine-cups, coaxed onward from place to place by those at table, as they reclined easily on their cushions of German eider-down, spread over the long-legged, carved couches.

A highly refined modification of the *acroama*—a musical performance during a meal for the diversion of guests—came presently, hovering round the place soothingly; and so unobtrusively, that the company could not guess, and did not like to ask, whether or not it had been designed by their entertainer; inclin-

ing on the whole to think it some wonderful peasant-music peculiar to that wild neighbourhood, turning, as it did now and then, to a solitary reed-note, like a bird's, while it wandered into the distance. It wandered quite away at last, as darkness with a bolder lamplight came on, and made way for another sort of entertainment. An odd, rapid, phantasmal glitter, advancing from the garden by torchlight, defined itself, as it came nearer, into a dance of young men in armour. Arrived at length in a portico, open to the supper-chamber, they contrived that their mechanical march-movement should fall out into a kind of highly expressive dramatic action: and with the utmost possible emphasis of dumb motion, their long swords weaving a silvery network in the air, they danced the *Death of Paris*. The young Commodus, already an adept in these matters, who had condescended to welcome the eminent Apuleius at the banquet, had mysteriously dropped from his place, to take his share in the performance; and at its conclusion reappeared, still wearing the dainty accoutrements of Paris, including a breastplate, composed entirely of overlapping tigers' claws, skilfully gilt. The youthful prince had lately assumed the dress of manhood, on the return of the emperor, for a brief visit, from the North; putting up his hair, in imitation of Nero, in a golden box dedicated to Capitoline Jupiter. His likeness to Aurelius, his father, had become, in consequence, more striking than ever; and he had one source of genuine interest in the

great literary guest of the occasion, in that the latter was the fortunate holder of the monopoly of exhibiting wild beasts and gladiatorial shows in the province of Carthage, where he resided.

Still, after all complaisance to the perhaps somewhat crude tastes of the good emperor's son, it was felt that with a guest like Apuleius whom they had come prepared to entertain as veritable *connoisseurs*, the conversation should be learned and superior, and the host at last deftly led his company round to literature, by the way of bindings. Elegant rolls of manuscript from his fine library of ancient Greek books passed from hand to hand round the table. It was a sign for the visitors themselves to draw their own choicest literary curiosities from their bags, as their contribution to the banquet: and one of them, a famous reader, choosing his lucky moment, delivered in *tenor* voice the piece which follows, with a preliminary query as to whether it could indeed be the composition of Lucian of Samosata, understood to be the great mocker of that day—

"What sound was that, Socrates?" asked Chærephon. "It came from the beach under the cliff yonder, and seemed a long way off—And how melodious it was! Was it a bird, I wonder. I thought all sea-birds were songless."

"It was a sea-bird," answered Socrates, "a bird called the Halcyon, and has a note full of plaining and tears. There is an old story people tell of it. It was a mortal woman once, daughter of Æolus,

god of the winds. Ceyx, the son of the morning-star, wedded her in her early maidenhood. The son was not less fair than the father; and when it came to pass that he died, the crying of the girl as she lamented his sweet usage, was—Just, that! And some while after, as Heaven willed it, she was changed into a bird. Floating now on bird's wings over the sea, she seeks her lost Ceyx, there; since she was not able to find him after long wandering over the land."

"That then is the Halcyon—the kingfisher," said Chærephon. "I never heard a bird like it before. It has truly a plaintive note. What kind of a bird is it, Socrates?"

"Not a large bird, though she has received large honour from the gods, on account of her singular conjugal affection. For whensoever she makes her nest, a law of nature brings round what is called Halcyon's weather—days distinguishable among all others for their serenity, though they come sometimes amid the storms of winter—Days like to-day! See how transparent is the sky above us, and how motionless the sea!—like a smooth mirror."

"True! A Halcyon day, indeed! and yesterday was the same. But tell me, Socrates, what is one to think of those stories which have been told from the beginning, of birds changed into mortals and mortals into birds? To me nothing seems more incredible."

"Dear Chærephon," said Socrates, "methinks we

are but half-blind judges of the impossible and the possible. We try the question by the standard of our human faculty, which avails neither for true knowledge, nor for faith, nor vision. Therefore many things seem to us impossible which are really easy, many things unattainable which are within our reach; partly through inexperience, partly through the childishness of our minds. For in truth, every man, even the oldest of us, is like a little child, so brief and babyish are the years of our life in comparison of eternity. Then, how can we, who comprehend not the faculties of gods and the heavenly host, tell whether aught of that kind be possible or no?—What a tempest you saw three days ago! One trembles but to think of the lightning, the thunderclaps, the violence of the wind! You might have thought the whole world was going to ruin. And then, after a little, came this wonderful serenity of weather, which has continued till to-day. Which do you think the greater and more difficult thing to do: —to exchange the disorder of that irresistible whirlwind to a clarity like this, and becalm the whole world again, or to refashion the form of a woman into that of a bird? We can teach even little children to do something of that sort,—to take wax or clay, and mould out of the same material many kinds of form, one after another, without difficulty. And it may be that to the Deity, whose power is too vast for comparison with ours, all processes of that kind are manageable and easy.—How much wider is the

whole heaven than thyself?—More than thou canst express.

"Among ourselves also, how vast the differences we observe in men's degrees of power! To you and me, and many another like us, many things are impossible which are quite easy to others. For those who are unmusical, to play on the flute; to read or write, for those who have not yet learned; is no easier than to make birds of women, or women of birds. From the dumb and lifeless egg Nature moulds her swarms of winged creatures, aided, as some will have it, by a divine and secret art in the wide air around us. She takes from the honeycomb a little memberless live thing; she brings it wings and feet, brightens and beautifies it with quaint variety of colour—and Lo! the bee in her wisdom, making honey worthy of the gods.

"It follows, that we mortals, being altogether of little account; able wholly to discern no great matter, sometimes not even a little one; for the most part at a loss as to what happens even with ourselves; may hardly speak with security as to what those vast powers of the immortal gods may be concerning Kingfisher, or Nightingale. Yet the glory of thy mythus, as my fathers bequeathed it to me, O! tearful songstress!—that will I too hand on to my children, and tell it often to my wives, Xanthippe and Myrto—the story of thy pious love to Ceyx, and of thy melodious hymns; and above all of the honour thou hast with the gods!"

The reader's well-turned periods seemed to stimulate, almost uncontrollably, the eloquent stirrings of the eminent man of letters then present. The impulse to speak masterfully was visible, before the recital was well over, in the moving lines about his mouth—by no means designed, as detractors were wont to say, merely to display the beauty of his teeth: and one of his followers, aware of his humours, made ready to transcribe what he would say, the sort of things of which a collection was then forming —the *Florida* or *Flowers*, so to call them, he was apt to let fall by the way: no *impromptu* ventures, but rather elaborate, carved *ivories* of speech, drawn, at length, out of the rich treasury of his memory, and as with a fine savour of old musk about them. Certainly in this case, thought Marius, it was worth while to hear a charming writer speak. Discussing, quite in our modern way, the peculiarities of those suburban views, especially the sea-views, of which he was a professed lover, he was also every inch a priest of Æsculapius, the patron-god of Carthage. There was a piquancy in his *rococo*, very African, and as it were perfumed personality, though he was now well-nigh sixty years old—a mixture of that sort of Platonic spiritualism which could speak of the soul of man as but a sojourner in the prison of the body really foreign to it, with such a relish for merely bodily graces as availed to set the fashion in matters of dress, deportment, accent, and the like, nay! with something also which reminded Marius of the vein of

coarseness he had found in the "Golden Book." All this made the total impression he conveyed a very uncommon one. Marius did not wonder, as he watched him speaking, that people freely attributed to him many of the marvellous adventures which he had recounted in that famous romance, over and above the wildest version of his own actual history—his extraordinary marriage, his religious initiations, his acts of mad generosity, and his trial as a sorcerer.

But a sign came from the imperial prince that it was time for the company to separate. He was entertaining his immediate neighbours at the table with a trick from the streets; tossing his olives in rapid succession into the air, and catching them as they fell, between his lips. His dexterity in this caused the mirth around him to become noisy, disturbing the sleep of the furry visitor: the learned party broke up; and Marius withdrew, glad to escape into the open air. The courtesans with their large wigs of false blond hair, were lurking for the guests, with groups of curious idlers. A great conflagration was visible in the distance. Was it in Rome itself, or in one of the villages of the country? Pausing on the terrace for a few minutes to watch it, Marius was for the first time able to converse intimately with Apuleius; and in this moment of confidence the "illuminist," himself with hair so carefully arranged, and who had seemed so full of affectations, almost like one of those light women there, as it were, dropped a veil, and appeared, while still permitting

the play of a certain element of theatrical interest in his *bizarre* tenets, to be ready to explain and defend his position reasonably. For a moment his fantastic foppishness, and his pretensions to idealism and vision, seemed to fall into an intelligible congruity with each other. In truth, it was the Platonic *idealism*, as he conceived it, which animated, and gave him so lively an interest in, the world of the purely outward aspects of men and things.—Did material things, such things as they had had around them all that evening, really need apology for being there, to interest one, at all? Were not all visible objects—the whole material world, according to the consistent testimony of philosophy, in many forms—full of souls; embarrassed perhaps, partly imprisoned, but still eloquent souls. Certainly, the philosophy of Plato, with its figurative imagery and apologue, its manifold aesthetic colouring, its measured eloquence, its music for the outward ear, had been, like Plato's old master himself, a two-sided or two-coloured thing.—Apuleius was a Platonist: only, for him, the *Ideas* of Plato were no creatures of logical abstraction, but really informing souls, in every type and variety of sensible things. Those noises in the house all supper-time, sounding through the tables and along the walls—were they only startings in the old rafters, at the sound of the music and laughter; or rather importunities of the secondary selves, the true unseen selves, of all the things and persons around; essaying to break through their mere, frivolous, transitory surfaces, and reminding

one of abiding essentials beyond them, which might have their say, their judgment to give, by and by, when the shifting of the meats and drinks at life's table should be over? Was not this the true significance of the Platonic doctrine—a hierarchy of divine beings, associating themselves with particular things and places, for the purpose of mediating between God and man, who only needs due attention to be aware of his celestial company, filling the air about him as thick as motes in the sunbeam, for the ray of sympathetic intelligence shot through it?

"Two kinds there are, of animated beings," he exclaimed—"Gods, entirely differing from men in the infinite distance of their abode (one part of them only is seen by our blunted vision—those mysterious stars!) in the eternity of their existence, in the perfection of their nature, contaminated by no contact with us: and men, dwelling on the earth, with frivolous and anxious minds, with infirm and mortal members, with variable fortunes; labouring in vain; taken altogether in their whole species, perhaps, eternal; but, severally, quitting the scene in irresistible succession.

"What then? Has nature connected itself together by no bond, but allowed itself to be thus crippled, and split into the divine and human elements?—And you will say to me; If so it is, that man is so entirely exiled from the immortal gods that all communication whatever is denied him, and not one of them occasionally visits us, as a shepherd visits his sheep—to whom shall I address my prayers? Whom shall I

invoke as the helper of the unfortunate, the protector of the good?

"There are certain divine powers of a middle nature, through whom our aspirations are conveyed to the gods, and theirs to us. Passing between the inhabitants of the earth and those of Heaven, they carry from one to the other prayers and bounties, supplication and assistance, being a kind of interpreters. This interval of the air is full of them! Through them, all revelations, miracles, magical processes, are effected. For, specially appointed individuals of this number have their special provinces, administered according to the disposition of each. They wander without fixed habitation; or dwell in men's houses—"

Just then a companion's hand, laid on the shoulder of the speaker in the darkness, carried him away, and the discourse broke off suddenly. But its singular utterances were sufficient to cast back on all the circumstances of this strange evening—the dance, the readings, the distant fire—a kind of allegoric expression; and made the whole occasion seem like nothing so much as one of those same famous Platonic figures or apologues. When Marius recalled it, he seemed always to hear again the voice of genuine conviction, from amidst that scene of at best elegant frivolity, pleading for so boldly mystical a view of things. For a moment, but only for a moment, as he listened, the trees seemed, as of old, to be growing "close against the sky." Yes! the reception of theory, of hypothesis, did depend a great deal on

temperament; was the equivalent of temperament. That celestial ladder, or hierarchy, was what experience suggested to Apuleius: it was what, in slightly different forms, certain persons in every age had tended to believe; they were glad to hear it asserted, on the authority of a grave philosophy: although he, Marius, certainly, would never feel that force of kindly warmth in the very contact of the air about him. Yearning, as much as they, for audible or visible companionship, in that hard world of Rome —for some wing, not visionary, across its unpeopled sky—he must still object, that they assumed all that with too much facility. His second thought upon it was that the presentation, even for a few moments of such fantastic vision, left the actual world more lonely. The little godship for whom the countryman (unconscious Platonist) trimmed his twinkling lamp, would never slip, for him, out of the bark of these immemorial olive-trees—no! not even in the wildest moonlight. And for himself, he must still hold by what his eyes really saw. Only, he had to concede also, that this boldness of Platonic theory was the witness, at least, to a variety of human disposition, and a consequent variety of mental view, which might —who could tell?—be correspondent to, be defined by and define, varieties of facts, of truths just "behind the veil," regarding the world they all alike had before them for their given premiss; a world, wider, perhaps, in its possibilities, than all possible fancies about it.

CHAPTER XXI.

TWO CURIOUS HOUSES.

II. THE CHURCH IN CECILIA'S HOUSE.

"Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions."

CORNELIUS had certain friends in or near Rome, whose household, to Marius, as he pondered now and then what might be the determining influences of that peculiar character, presented itself as possibly its main secret—the hidden source from which he might derive the beauty and strength of a nature, so persistently fresh in the midst of a somewhat jaded world. But Marius had never yet seen those friends; and it was almost by accident that the veil of reserve was at last lifted, and, with strange contrast to his visit to the poet's villa at Tusculum, he entered another curious house.

"The house in which she lives," says that mystical German writer quoted once before, "is for the orderly soul, which does not live on blindly before her, but is ever, out of her passing experiences, building and adorning the parts of a many-roomed abode for her-

self, only an expansion of the body; as the body, according to the philosophy of Swedenborg, is but an expansion of the soul. For such an orderly soul, as she lives onward, all sorts of delicate affinities establish themselves, between her and the doors and passage-ways, the lights and shadows, of her outward abode, until she seems incorporate into it—till at last, in the entire expressiveness of what is outward, there is for her, to speak properly, no longer any distinction between outward and inward, at all; and the light which creeps at a particular hour on a particular picture or space upon the wall, the scent of flowers in the air at a particular window, become to her, not so much apprehended objects, as themselves powers of apprehension, and doorways to things beyond—seeds or rudiments of new faculties, by which she, dimly yet surely, apprehends a matter lying beyond her actually attained capacity of sense and spirit."

So it must needs be in a world which is itself, we may think, together with that bodily "tent" or "tabernacle," but one of the many vestures of the pilgrim soul, to be left by her, worn out one by one, as if on the wayside; as it was from her, indeed, that they borrowed all the temporary value and significancy they had.

The two friends were returning to Rome from a visit to a country-house, where again a mixed company of guests had been assembled—Marius, for his part, a little weary of gossip, and those sparks of ill-tempered rivalry, which seem sometimes to be the

only sort of fire that the intercourse of men in general society can strike out of them. Mere reaction against all this, as they started in the clear morning, made their companionship, for one of them at least, not less tranquillising than that solitude he so much valued. Something in the south-west wind combining with their own intention, favoured increasingly, as the hours wore on, a serenity like that Marius had felt once before in journeying over the great plain towards Tibur—a serenity which was to-day brotherly amity also, and which seemed to draw into its own charmed circle all that was then present to eye or ear, while they talked or were silent together, and all petty irritations, and the like, shrank out of existence, or were certainly beyond its limits. The natural fatigue of the long journey overcame them quite suddenly at last, while they were still about two miles distant from Rome. The endless line of tombs and cypress-trees had been visible for hours against the sky towards the West; and it was just where a cross-road from the Latin Way fell into the Appian, that Cornelius halted at a doorway in a long, low wall—the boundary-wall of the court of a villa, it might seem—as if at liberty to enter, and rest there awhile. He held the open door for his companion to enter also, if he would; with an expression, as he lifted the latch, which seemed to ask Marius, apparently shrinking from a possible intrusion—"Would you like to see it?"—Was he willing to look upon that, the seeing of which might define—yes! define the critical turning-point in his days?

The little doorway in this long, low wall, so old that it seemed almost a part of the rocky soil on which it was built, admitted them, in fact, into the outer courtyard or garden of a villa, disposed in one of those abrupt natural hollows, which give its character to the country in this place; so that the house itself, and all its dependent buildings, the spaciousness of which surprised Marius as he entered, were wholly concealed from passengers along the road. All around, in those well-ordered precincts, were quiet signs of wealth and a noble taste—a taste, indeed, chiefly evidenced in the selection and juxtaposition of the material it had to deal with, consisting almost exclusively of the remains of older art, here arranged and harmonised, with effects, both as regards colour and form, so delicate, as to seem really derivative from a spirit fairer than any which lay within the resources of the ancient world. It was the old way of true *Renaissance*—the way of nature with her roses, the divine way with the body of man, and it may be with his very soul—conceiving the new organism, by no sudden and abrupt creation, but rather by the action of a new principle upon elements all of which had indeed lived and died many times. The fragments of older architecture, the mosaics, the spiral columns, the precious corner-stones of immemorial building, had put on, by such juxtaposition, a new and singular expressiveness, an air of grave thought and intellectual purpose, in itself, aesthetically, very seductive. Lastly, herb and tree had

taken possession of it all, spreading their seed-bells and light branches, just alive in the trembling air, above the ancient garden-walls, against the wide spaces of sunset. And from the first they could hear singing—the singing partly of children, it would seem, and of a new sort; so novel indeed in its effect, that it carried the memory of Marius back to those old efforts of Flavian to conceive a new poesy. It was the expression not altogether of mirth, yet of a wonderful happiness—the blithe expansion of a joyful soul, in people upon whom some all-subduing experience had wrought heroically, and who still remembered, on this bland afternoon, the hour of a great deliverance.

His old native susceptibility to the spirit, the sympathies, of places—above all to any hieratic or religious expression they might have—was at its liveliest, as Marius, still possessed by that peculiar singing, and still amid the evidences of a grave discretion all around him, entered the house itself. That intelligent seriousness about life, the lack of which had always seemed to him to make those who were without it of some strange, different species from himself, summing up all the lessons of his experience, from those old days at White-nights, was concentrated here, as if in designed congruity with his favourite precepts of the power of physical vision, into an actual picture. If the true value of souls is in proportion to what they can admire, Marius was just then an acceptable soul. As he passed through

the various chambers, great and small, one dominant thought increased upon him—the thought of chaste women and their children; of the various affections of the family life amid its most natural conditions, but developed, in devout imitation of some sublime new type of it, into great controlling passions. There reigned throughout, an order and purity, an orderly disposition, as if by way of making ready for some gracious spousals. The place itself was like a bride adorned for her husband: and its singular cheerfulness, the abundant light everywhere, the sense of peaceful industry, of which he received a deep impression without precisely reckoning wherein it resided, as he moved on rapidly, were in forcible contrast just at first to the place to which he was next conducted by Cornelius: still with a sort of eager, hurried, half-troubled reluctance, and as if he forbore an explanation which might well be looked for by his companion.

An old flower-garden in the rear of the house, set here and there with a venerable olive-tree—a picture in pensive shade and fiery blossom, as transparent, in that afternoon light, as the old miniature-painters' work on the walls of the chambers above—was bounded, towards the west, by a low, grassy hill. A narrow opening cut in its steep side, like a solid blackness there, admitted Marius and his gleaming companion into a hollow cavern or crypt, which was indeed but the family burial-place of the Cecilii (to whom this residence belonged) brought thus, after an

arrangement then becoming not unusual, into immediate connexion with the abode of the living; in a bold assertion of the unity of family life, which the sanction of the *Holy Family* would, hereafter, more and more reinforce. Here was, in fact, the centre of the peculiar religious expressiveness, the sanctity, of the whole place. 'Every person makes the place that belongs to him a *religious* place at his own election, by *the carrying of his dead into it*"—had been a persuasion of old Roman law, which it was reserved for the early Christian societies, like that which the piety of a wealthy Roman matron had here established, to realise in all its consequences. Yet certainly it was unlike any cemetery Marius had ever yet seen: most obviously in this, that these people had returned to the older fashion of disposing of their dead by burial instead of burning. A family sepulchre in the first instance, it was growing into a vast *necropolis*, a whole township of the dead, by means of some free expansion of the family interest beyond its amplest natural limits. The air of venerable beauty which characterised the house and its precincts above, was maintained here also. It was certainly with a great outlay of labour that these long, seemingly endless, yet carefully designed galleries, were so rapidly increasing, with their orderly layers of beds or berths, one above another, cut on both sides of the pathway, in the porous black *tufa*, through which all the moisture filters downwards, leaving the parts above dry and wholesome. All alike were carefully closed, and

with all the delicate costliness at command; some with simple tiles of baked clay, many with slabs of marble, enriched by fair inscriptions—marble, in some cases, taken from an older pagan tomb—the inscription sometimes a *palimpsest*, the new epitaph being woven into the fading letters of an earlier one.

As in a pagan cemetery, an abundance of utensils for the worship and commemoration of the dead was disposed around—incense, vessels of floating oil-lights, above all, garlands and flowers, relieved into all the stronger fieriness by the coal-like blackness of the soil itself in this place, a volcanic sandstone, the cinder of burnt-out fires. (Would they ever kindle, take possession of, and transform the place again?) Turning into an ashy paleness where, at regular intervals, a *luminare*, or air-hole, let in a hard beam of clear but sunless light from above, with their heavy sleepers, row upon row, leaving a passage so narrow that only a single person could move along it at a time, cheek to cheek with them, the high walls seemed to shut one in, into the great company of the dead. Only just the long straight pathway remained before him; opening, however, here and there, into a small chamber, around a broad, table-like coffin, or "altar" tomb (one or more), adorned more profusely than the others, sometimes as if in observance of an anniversary. Clearly, these people, concurring here with the special sympathies of Marius himself, had adopted this practice of burial from some peculiar feeling of hope they entertained concerning

the body; a feeling which, in no irreverent curiosity, he would fain have understood. The complete, irreparable disappearance of the dead on the funeral pyre, so crushing to the spirits, as he had found it, had long since given him a preference for this mode of settlement to the last sleep, as having something more homelike and hopeful about it, at least in outward seeming. But whence the strange confidence that these "handfuls of white dust" would hereafter recompose themselves once more into exulting human creatures? By what heavenly alchemy, what reviving dew from above, which was certainly never again to reach the dead violets?—*Januarius, Agapetus, Felicitas—Martyrs! refresh, I pray you, the soul of Cecil, of Cornelius!* said an inscription (one of many such) scratched, like a passing sigh, when the mortar was still fresh which had closed-in the prison-door. All criticism of this bold hope, apparently as sincere as it was audacious in its claim, being set aside, here, at least, carried further than ever before, was that pious, systematic commemoration of the dead, which in its chivalrous refusal to forget and wholly leave the helpless, had always seemed to Marius the central type or symbol of all natural duty.

The stern soul of Jonathan Edwards, applying the faulty theology of John Calvin, afforded him, we know, the vision of infants not a span long, on the floor of hell. All visitors to the Catacombs must have noticed, in a very different theological connexion, the numerous children's graves—beds of infants, but

a span long indeed—little, lowly prisoners of hope, on these sacred floors. It was with great curiosity, certainly, that Marius observed them; in some instances adorned with the favourite toys of their tiny occupants—toy-soldiers, little chariot-wheels, all the paraphernalia of a baby-house; and when he saw afterwards the living ones, who sang and were busy, above—sang their psalm *Laudate Pueri Dominum!*—their very faces caught for him a sort of quaint unreality, from the memory of those others, the children of the Catacombs, but a little way below.

> Hic congesta jacet quæris si turba piorum:
> Corpora sanctorum retinent veneranda sepulcra!—

Here and there, mingling with the record of merely natural decease, and sometimes even at these children's graves, were the signs of violent death or martyrdom —the proof that some "had loved not their lives unto the death"—in the little red phial of blood, the palm-branch, the red flowers for their heavenly "birthday." It was in one sepulchre, in particular, distinguished in this way, and devoutly adorned for what, by a bold paradox, was thus treated as, *natalitia* —a birthday, that the arrangements of the whole place visibly centered. And it was with a curious novelty of feeling, of the dawning of a fresh order of experiences upon him, that, standing beside those mournful relics, snatched in haste from the common place of execution not many years before, Marius became, as by some gleam of foresight, aware of the

whole possible force of evidence for a strange, new hope, defining a new and weighty motive of action in the world, in those tragic deaths for the "Christian superstition;" of which he had heard something indeed; but which had seemed to him hitherto but one savagery, one self-provoked savagery, the more, in a cruel and stupid world.

And that poignant memory of suffering seemed to draw him on towards a still more vivid and pathetic image of suffering, in a distant but not dim background. Yes! the interest, the expression of the entire place was filled with that, like the savour of some precious incense. Penetrating the whole atmosphere, touching everything around with its peculiar sentiment, it seemed to make all this visible mortality, death itself, more beautiful than any fantastic dream of old mythology had ever hoped to make it; and that, in a simple sincerity of feeling about a supposed actual fact. The thought, the word, *Pax—Pax Tecum!* —was put forth everywhere, with images of hope, snatched sometimes even from that jaded pagan world, which had really afforded men so little of it from first to last,—the consoling images it had thrown off, of succour, of regeneration, of escape from death, —Hercules wrestling with Death for possession of Alcestis, Orpheus taming the wild beasts, the Shepherd with his sheep, the Shepherd carrying the sick lamb upon his shoulders. Only, after all, these imageries formed but the slightest contribution to the whole dominant effect of tranquil hope there—of a kind of

heroic cheerfulness and grateful expansion of heart; again, as with the sense of some real deliverance, and which seemed actually to deepen, the longer one lingered through these strange and fearful passages. A figure, partly pagan, yet the most frequently repeated of all those visible parables—the figure of one just escaped, as if from the sea, still in strengthless, surprised joy, clinging to the very verge of the shore—together with the inscription beneath it, seemed best to express the sentiment of the whole. And it was just as he had puzzled out this inscription—

> *I went down to the bottom of the mountains;*
> *The earth with her bars was about me for ever;*
> *Yet hast Thou brought up my life from corruption!*

—that, hardly with a sense of surprise or change, Marius found himself emerging again, like a later mystic traveller through similar dark places "quieted by hope," into the daylight.

They were still within the precincts of the house, still in possession of that wonderful singing, though almost in the open country, with a great view of the *Campagna* before them, and the hills beyond. The orchard or meadow, through which their path lay, was already gray in the dewy twilight, though the western sky, in which the greater stars were visible, was still afloat with ruddy splendour, seeming to repress by contrast the colouring of all earthly things, yet with the sense of a great richness lingering in their shadows. Just then the voices of the singers,

a "voice of joy and health," concentrated themselves, with a solemn antistrophic movement, into an evening, or "candle" hymn—*the hymn of the kindling of the lamp*. It was like the evening itself, its hope and fears, and the stars shining in the midst of it, made audible. Half above, half below the level mist, which seemed to divide light from darkness (the great wild flowers of the meadow just distinguishable around her skirts, as she moved across the grass) came now the mistress of the place, the wealthy Roman matron, left early a widow by the confessor Cecilius a few years before. Arrayed in long robes, with heavy, antique folds, and a veil or coif folded under the chin, "gray within gray," she seemed to Marius to have, in her temperate beauty, something of the male and serious character of the best Greek female statuary.[1] Very foreign, however, to any Greek statuary was the expression of pathetic care, with which she carried the child in her arms, warm within the folds of her mantle. Another little child, a year or two older, walked beside her, with the fingers of one hand bent upon her girdle. They stayed for a moment to give an evening greeting to Cornelius, as they passed.

And that visionary scene was the fitting close of the afternoon's strange experiences. A few minutes afterwards, as he was passing again upon the public road, it might have seemed a dream. The house of

[1] "O, when mine eyes did see Olivia first,
Methought she purged the air of pestilence!"

Cecilia grouped itself beside that other curious house he had lately visited at Tusculum. Yet what a contrast did the former present, in its suggestions of hopeful industry, of immaculate cleanness, of responsive affection!—all determined by the transporting discovery of a fact, or series of facts, in which the old puzzle of life had found its key. In truth, one of his most constant and characteristic traits had ever been the longing for *escape*—for sudden, relieving interchange, even upon the spaces of life, along which he had lingered most pleasantly—for a lifting, from time to time, of the actual horizon. It was like the necessity the painter is under, to put an open window or doorway in the background of his picture, which, without that, would be heavy and inanimate; or like the sick man's longing for northern coolness, and whispering willow-trees, amid the breathless and motionless evergreen forests of the south. Just in this way had that visit happened to him, through so slight an accident. Rome and Roman life, just then, had come to seem to him like a close wood of beautiful bronze-work, transformed, by some malign enchantment, out of the generations of living trees, yet with its roots in a deep, downtrodden soil of poignant human susceptibilities. In the midst of its suffocation, that old longing for escape had been satisfied by this vision of the church in Cecilia's house, as never before. It was still, indeed, according to the unchangeable law of his character, to the eye, to the visual faculty of mind, that those experiences appealed—the peace-

ful light and shade, the boys whose very faces seemed to sing, the virginal beauty of the mother and her children. Only, in his case, all that constituted a very real, and controlling or exigent matter, added to life, with which, according to his old maxim, he must make terms.

The thirst for every kind of "experience," prompted by a philosophy which said that nothing was intrinsically great or small, had ever been at strife in him with a hieratic refinement, in which the boy-priest survived; prompting the selection, the choice, of what was perfect of its kind; and a subsequent chivalrous adherence of mind to that. That had led him along always in communion with ideals, at least half-realised in his own conditions of being, or in the actual company about him, above all, in Cornelius. Surely, in this strange new society he had known for the first time to-day—in this holy family, like a fenced garden—was the fulfilment of all the judgments and preferences of that half-known friend, which of late years had been so often his protection in the perplexities of his life. Here was, it might be, if not the cure, yet the solace and anodyne of his great sorrows; of that constitutional sorrowfulness, which might be by no means peculiar to himself, but which had made his life, at all events, indeed like a long "disease of the spirit." The very air of this place seemed to come out to meet him, as if full of mercy in its mere contact; like a soothing touch to an aching limb. And yet, on the other hand, he was aware that it might

awaken responsibilities—new, untried responsibilities —and demand something from him, in return. Might this new vision, like the malignant beauty of that old pagan Medusa, be exclusive of all admiring gaze on anything save itself? At least he suspected that after it he could never again be altogether as he had been before.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MINOR "PEACE OF THE CHURCH."

FAITHFUL to the spirit of his early Epicurean philosophy and the impulse to surrender himself, in perfectly liberal inquiry about it, to anything that, as a matter of fact, attracted or impressed him strongly, Marius informed himself with much pains concerning the church in Cecilia's house; inclining at first to explain the peculiarities of that place by the establishment there of the *schola* or common hall of one of those burial-guilds, which at that time covered so much of the unofficial, and, as it might be called, subterranean, enterprise of Roman society.

And what he found, thus looking as it were for the dead among the living, was the vision of a natural, a scrupulously natural, love; transforming, by some new *finesse* of insight into the truth of human relationships, and under the urgency of some new motive by him so far unfathomable, all the conditions of life. He saw, in all its primitive freshness and amid the lively facts of its actual coming into the world, as a reality of experience, that regenerate type

of humanity, which, centuries later, Giotto and his successors, down to the best and purest days of the young Raffaelle, working under conditions very friendly to the imagination, were to conceive as an artistic ideal. He felt there, felt amid the stirring of some wonderful new hope within himself, the genius, the unique power of Christianity; in exercise then, as it has been exercised ever since, in spite of many hindrances and under the most inopportune circumstances. Chastity—he seemed to understand—the chastity of men and women, with all the conditions and results proper to that chastity, is the most beautiful thing in the world, and the truest conservation of the creative energy by which men and women were first brought into it. The nature of the family, for which the better genius of old Rome itself had so sincerely cared, of the family and its appropriate affections—all that love of one's kindred by which obviously one does triumph in some degree over death—had never been so felt before. Here, surely! in its nest-like peace and warmth, its jealous exclusion of all that was against itself and its own immaculate naturalness, in the hedge set around the sacred thing on every side, this re-institution of the family did but carry forward, and give effect to, the purposes, the kindness of nature itself, friendly to man, at all those points, more especially, where it involved (by way of due recognition of some unfathomed divine condescension, in a certain fact or series of facts) pity, and a willing sacrifice of oneself,

for the weak, for children and the aged, for the dead even. And then, for its constant outward token, its significant manner or index, it issued in a debonair grace, and some mystic attractiveness—a courtesy, which made Marius doubt whether, after all, that famed Greek gaiety or blitheness in the handling of life, had been so great a success. In contrast with the incurable insipidity even of what was most exquisite in the higher Roman life, and still truest to the old primitive soul of goodness amid its evil, this new creation he saw (a fair picture, beyond the skill of any master of old pagan beauty) had indeed the appropriate freshness of "the bride adorned for her husband." And still its grace was no mere simplicity. Things, new and old, seemed to be coming as if out of some goodly treasure-house, the brain full of science, and the heart rich with various sentiment, possessing withal this surprising healthfulness, this *reality* of heart.

"You would hardly believe," writes Pliny to his wife, "what a longing for you possesses me. Habit —that we have not been used to be apart—adds herein to the primary force of affection. It is that keeps me awake at night fancying I see you beside me. That is why my feet take me unconsciously to your sitting-room, at those hours when I was wont to visit you there. That is why I turn from the door of the empty chamber, sad and ill-at-ease, like an excluded lover."—

There is a real idyll from that family life, the conservation of which had been the motive of so large a

part of the religion of the Romans, still surviving among them; as it survived also in the disposition and aims of Aurelius, and, in spite of slanderous tongues, in the actual sweetness of his interior life. What Marius had been permitted to see was a realisation of such life higher still: and with—Yes!—with a more effective sanction or consecration than had ever been known before, in that fact, or series of facts, to be ascertained by those who would.

The chief glory of the reign of the Antonines had been, indeed, that society had attained in it, very imperfectly, and for the most part by cumbrous effort of law, many of those ends which Christianity had reached with all the sufficiency of a direct and appropriate instinct. Pagan Rome, too, had its touching charity-sermons on occasions of great public distress; its charity-children in long file, in memory of the elder empress Faustina; its predecessor, under patronage of Æsculapius, to the modern hospital for the sick on the island of Saint Bartholomew in the Tiber. But what pagan charity was doing tardily, and as it were with the painful calculation of old age, the church was doing, almost without thinking about it, in the plenary masterfulness of youth, because it was her very being thus to do. "You don't understand your own efforts," she seems to say, to pagan virtue. She possessed herself of those efforts, and advanced them with an unparalleled liberality and largeness. The gentle Seneca would have reverent burial provided even for the dead corpse of a criminal. Yet

when a certain woman gathered for interment the insulted remains of Nero, the pagan world surmised that she must be a Christian: only a Christian would have been likely to conceive so chivalrous a devotion towards wretchedness. "We refuse to be witnesses even of a homicide commanded by the laws," pleads a Christian apologist, "we take no part in your cruel sports nor in the spectacles of the amphitheatre, and we hold that to witness a murder is the same thing as to commit one." And there was another duty almost forgotten, the conscience of which Rousseau stirred up in a later degenerate age. In an impassioned discourse the sophist Favorinus counsels mothers to suckle their own infants; and there are Roman epitaphs inscribed by children to their mothers which gratefully record this proof of natural affection, as a thing then unusual. And in this matter again, what a sanction, what a provocative to natural duty, lay in that image of the new *Madonna*, just then rising upon the world like the dawn!

Christianity had, indeed, revealed itself as the great source and motive of chastity. And this chastity, reaffirmed in all its conditions, fortified that rehabilitation of peaceful labour, after the mind, the pattern, of the workman of Galilee, which was another direct instinct of the catholic church, as indeed the long-desired initiator of a real religion of cheerfulness, and a true lover of the industry (so to term it), the labour, the creation, of God.

And that high-toned yet genial reassertion of the

ideal of woman, of the family, of industry, of man's work in life, so close to the truth of nature, was also, in that charmed moment of the minor "Peace of the church," realising itself as an influence tending to beauty, to the adornment of life and the world. The sword in the world, the right eye plucked out, the right hand cut off, the spirit of reproach which those images express, and of which monasticism is the fulfilment, reflect one side only of the nature of the divine missionary of the New Testament. Opposed to, yet blent with, this ascetic or militant character, is the image of the Good Shepherd—favourite sacred image of the primitive church—serene, blithe, and debonair, beyond the gentlest shepherd of Greek mythology; the daily food of whose spirit is the beatific vision of the kingdom of peace among men. And this latter side of the divine character of Christ, rightly understood, is the final achievement of that vein of bold and brilliant hopefulness in man, which had sustained him so far through his immense labour, his immense sorrows; and of which that peculiarly Greek *gaiety*, in the handling of life, is but one manifestation. Sometimes one, sometimes the other, of those two contrasted aspects of the character of Christ, have, in different ages and under the urgency of differing human needs, been at work also in his "mystical body." Certainly, in that brief "Peace of the church" under the Antonines, the spirit of a pastoral security and happiness seems to have been largely expanding itself. There, in the

early Roman church, was to be seen, and on a basis of reasonable grounds, that long-sought serenity of satisfaction, on a dispassionate survey of the facts of life, contrasting itself for Marius, in particular, very forcibly, with the imperial philosopher's so heavy burden of unrelieved melancholy. It was Christianity in its humanity, or even in its humanism, in its generous hopefulness for man, its common sense, and alacrity of cheerful service, its sympathy with all creatures, its appreciation of beauty and daylight.

"The angel of righteousness," says the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the most characteristic religious book of that age, its Pilgrim's Progress—"the angel of righteousness is delicate and modest, and meek and quiet: Take from thyself grief, for (as Hamlet will one day know!) it is the sister of doubt and ill-temper: Grief is more evil than all the spirits, and is most dreadful to the servants of God, and beyond all spirits destroyeth man: For, as when good news has come to any one in grief, straightway he forgetteth his former grief, and no longer attendeth to anything except the good news which he hath heard, so do ye, also! having received a renewal of your spirit through the beholding of these good things: Put on therefore gladness that hath always favour before God, and is acceptable unto Him, and delight thyself in it; for every man that is glad doeth the things that are good, and thinketh good thoughts, despising grief."—Such were the popular utterances

of this new people, among whom so much of what Marius had valued most in the world seemed to be under renewal; heightened and harmonised by some transforming spirit, a spirit which, in its dealing with the elements of the old world, was guided by a wonderful tact of selection, exclusion, juxtaposition; begetting thereby a unique expression of freshness, of animation and a grave beauty, because the whole outward world of sense was understood to be but a showing-forth of the unction and royalty of an inward priesthood and kingship in the soul, among the prerogatives of which was a delightful sense of freedom.

The reader may think perhaps, that Marius, who, Epicurean as he was, had his visionary aptitudes, by an inversion of one of Plato's peculiarities with which he was of course familiar, must have descended, by *fore-sight*, upon a later age than his own, and anticipated the reign of Christian poetry and art under Francis of Assisi. But if he dreamed on one of those nights of the beautiful house of Cecilia, its flowers and lights, of Cecilia herself moving among the lilies, with a grace enhanced as things sometimes are in healthy dreams, it was indeed hardly an anticipation. He had lighted, by one of the peculiar intellectual good-fortunes of his life, upon a period when, even more than in the days of austere *ascêsis* which had preceded and were to follow it, the church was true for a moment, truer perhaps than she would ever be again, to that element of profound serenity in the soul

of her founder, which reflected the eternal goodwill of God to man, "in whom," according to the oldest version of the angelic message, "He is well-pleased."

For what Christianity did centuries later in the way of informing an art, a poesy, of higher and graver beauty, as some may think, than even Greek art and poetry at their best, was in truth conformable to the original tendency of its genius; miscarried, indeed, in the true dark ages, through many circumstances, of which the later persecutions it sustained, beginning with that under Aurelius himself, constituted one; the blood of martyrs ceasing at a particular period to be the true "seed of the church." The original capacity of the catholic church in this direction, amply asserted, as I have said, in the New Testament, was also really at work, in that her first early "Peace," under the Antonines—the *minor* "Peace of the church," as we might call it, in distinction from the final "Peace of the church," commonly so-called, under Constantine. Francis of Assisi, with his following in the sphere of poetry and the arts—the voice of Dante, the hand of Giotto—giving visible feature and colour, and a palpable place among men, to the regenerate race, did but re-establish a real continuity, suspended in part by those troublous intervening centuries, with the gracious spirit of the primitive church in that first early springtide of her prosperity: as that also is continuous with the divine happiness, the peace, of her Founder. Constantine's later "Peace," on the other hand, in many

ways, does but establish the exclusiveness, the puritanism, the ascetic or monastic gloom of the church in the period between Aurelius and the first Christian emperor, soured a little by oppression and misconstruction, and driven inward upon herself in a world of tasteless controversy: the church then finally coming to terms, and effecting something more than a *modus vivendi* with the world, at a less fortunate moment of the world's development.[1]

Already, in the reign of Antoninus Pius, the time had gone by when men became Christians under the influence of some sudden overpowering impression, and with all the untranquillising effects of such a crisis. At this period a majority perhaps had been born Christians, had been ever with peaceful hearts in their Father's house. Millenarianism—the expectation of the speedy coming of judgment—with all the consequences it involved in men's tempers, was dying out. Every day the contrast between the church and the world was becoming less trenchant. And now also, as the church rested awhile from persecution, that rapid self-development outward from within, proper to a period of peace, was in progress. Antoninus Pius indeed, far more truly than Marcus Aurelius, belonged to that group of pagan saints for whom Dante, like Augustine, has provided in his scheme of the house with many mansions. A sincere old Roman piety urged his fortunately constituted nature to no mistakes, no offences against humanity.

[1] Compare Mill on *Liberty*, page 50.

There was a kind of guilelessness in him, one reward of which was this singular happiness, that under his reign there was no shedding of Christian blood. To him belonged that half-humorous placidity of soul, of a kind illustrated later very effectively by Montaigne, which, starting with an instinct of mere fairness towards human nature and the world, at last actually qualifies its possessor to be almost the friend of the people of Christ. Itself, in its own nature, simple, amiable, full of a reasonable gaiety, Christianity has often had its advantage of characters like that. And this geniality of Antoninus Pius, like the geniality of the old earth itself, caused the church, which is indeed no alien from that old mother earth, to expand and thrive as by natural process, under his sight. "The period of the *embryogeny* of Christianity," says M. Renan, "was then complete. At that date the infant is in possession of all its organs, is detached from its mother, and will live henceforward by its own proper powers of life." And the beautiful chapter of this charmed period of the church under the Antonines, up to the later years of the reign of Aurelius, contains, as one of its elements of interest, the earliest development of Christian ritual under the presidency of the church of Rome.

Again as in one of those quaint, mystical visions of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, "the aged woman, that true Sibyl, had become more and more youthful: And in the third vision she was quite young, and radiant with beauty; only her hair was that of an

aged woman: And at the last she was joyous, and seated upon a throne"—seated upon a throne, "because her position is a strong one." The subterranean worship of the church properly belonged to those periods of her early history in which her worship was made penal: at other times it blossomed broadly aboveground, sometimes for lengthy intervals. Hiding herself for awhile when persecution became violent, she resumed, when there was felt to be no more than ordinary danger, "her free yet modest ways." And the sort of outward prosperity which she was enjoying in the period of her first "Peace" was reinforced by the decision at this moment of a crisis in her internal history.

In the life of the church, as in all the moral life of mankind, there are two distinct ideals, either of which it is possible to follow—two conceptions, under one or the other of which we may represent to ourselves man's effort after the better life—corresponding to those two contrasted aspects, noted above, as discernible in the picture presented by the New Testament itself of the character of Christ. The ideal of Asceticism represents that moral effort as essentially a sacrifice, the sacrifice of one part of human nature to another, that it may live in what survives the more completely; while the ideal of Culture represents it as a harmonious development of all the parts of human nature, in just proportion to each other. It was to the latter order of ideas that the church, and especially the church of Rome, in this period of the

Antonines, was lending herself. In this earlier "Peace" she had set up for herself the ideal of spiritual *development*, by an instinct, through which, in those serene moments, she was absolutely true to the peaceful soul of her Founder. "Goodwill to men," she said, "in whom God Himself is well-pleased!" For a moment, at least, there was no forced opposition between the soul and the body, the world and the spirit, and the grace of graciousness itself was pre-eminently with the people of Christ. Tact, good sense—ever the note of a true orthodoxy—the merciful compromises of the church (indicative of her imperial vocation in regard to all the varieties of human kind, with a universality of which the old Roman pastorship she was to supersede was but the prototype) had already become conspicuous, in spite of a discredited, irritating, vindictive society, all around her.

Against that divine urbanity and moderation, the old Montanism we read of dimly, was a fanatical reaction—sour, falsely anti-mundane, ever with an air of ascetic affectation, and a bigoted distaste, in particular, for all the peculiar graces of womanhood. By it, the desire to please was understood to come of the author of evil. In that interval of quietness, it was inevitable, by a law of reaction, that some such rigorism should arise. And again, it was the church of Rome especially, now becoming every day more and more the capital of the Christian world, feeling her way already to a universality of guidance in spiritual

things equal to that of the earlier Rome in the political order, and part of the secret of which must be a generous tolerance of diversities, which checked the nascent puritanism of that time, and vindicated for all Christian people a cheerful liberty of heart, against many a narrow group of sectaries; all alike, in their different ways, accusers of the genial creation of God. In her full, fresh faith in the *Evangele*—in a real regeneration of the earth and the body, in the dignity of man's whole nature—for a moment, at least, at that critical period in the development of Christianity, she was for reason, for common sense, for fairness to human nature, for the due place of woman in the church, and, generally, for what may be called the naturalness of Christianity; as also for its comely order. It was through the bishops of Rome especially, now transforming themselves rapidly in a really catholic sense into universal pastors, that she was defining for herself this humanist path. "The dignified ecclesiastical hierarchy claimed the right of absolution, and made use of it with an ease which scandalised the puritans." And as regards those who had fallen from faith in an hour of weakness, the church of Rome, especially, elected by no means to be as the elder brother of the prodigal son, but rather to pour her oil and wine into the aching wounds.

And then, in this season of expansion, as if now at last the catholic church might venture to show her outward lineaments as they really were, worship —the beauty of holiness, nay! the elegance of sanctity

—and here again under the presidency of the church of Rome, was developing, with a bold and confident gladness, such as has not been the ideal of worship in any later age of the church. The tables were turned, and the prize of a cheerful temper on a survey of life was no longer with the Greek. The aesthetic charm of the catholic church, her evocative power over all that is eloquent and expressive in the better soul of man, her outward comeliness, her dignifying convictions about human nature—all this, as abundantly realised centuries later by Dante and Giotto, by the great church-builders, by the great ritualists like Gregory, and the masters of sacred music in the middle age—we may see, in dim anticipation, in that charmed space towards the end of the second century. Dissipated, or turned aside, partly through the great mistake of Marcus Aurelius, for a short time we may discern that influence clearly predominant there. What might seem harsh as dogma was already justifying itself as worship; according to the sound rule—*Lex orandi, lex credendi.*

The marvellous liturgic spirit of the church, her wholly unparalleled genius for worship, being thus awake, she was rapidly reorganising both pagan and Jewish elements of ritual, for the expanding therein of her own new heart of devotion. The ritual system of the church, which must rank as we see it in historic retrospect, like the Gothic architecture for instance, as one of the great, conjoint, and, so to term them, *necessary*, products of human mind, and which has

ever since directed, with so deep a fascination, men's religious instincts, was then growing together, as a recognisable new treasure in the sum of things. And what has been on the whole the method of the church, as "a power of sweetness and patience," in dealing with matters like pagan art, was already manifest: it has the character of the divine moderation of Christ himself. It was only among the ignorant, only in the "villages," that Christianity, even when victorious over paganism, was really iconoclastic. In the great "Peace" under Constantine, while there was plenty of destructive fanaticism in the country, the revolution was accomplished in the large towns, following the Roman pattern, in a manner more orderly and discreet. The faithful were bent less on the destruction of the pagan temples than on the conversion of them and of their furniture to better uses; and the temples became Christian sanctuaries, with much beautiful furniture ready to hand.—*In hoc marmore gentilium olim incensa fumabant.*

Already, in accordance with this later wisdom, that church of the *minor* "Peace" had adopted many of the beauties of pagan feeling and pagan custom; as being indeed a living creature, taking up, transforming, and accommodating still more closely to the human heart, what of right belonged to it. It was thus that an obscure synagogue expanded into the catholic church. Gathering, from a richer and more varied field of sound than remained for him, those old Roman harmonies, some notes of which Gregory the

Great, centuries later, and after generations of interrupted development, formed into the Gregorian music, she was already, as we have seen, the house of song —of a wonderful new music and poesy. As if in anticipation of the sixteenth century, the church was becoming *humanistic*, in a best and earliest *Renaissance*. Singing there had been in abundance from the first; but often it dared only be "of the heart." It broke out, when it might, into the beginnings of a true ecclesiastical music; the Jewish psalter, which it had inherited from the synagogue, turning now, gradually, from Greek into broken Latin—into Italian; as the ritual use of the rich, fresh, expressive vernacular superseded the earlier language of the church. And through certain surviving remnants of Greek in the later Latin liturgies, we may still discern a highly interesting intermediate phase of ritual development, in which the Greek and Latin were in combination; the poor, surely—the poor and the children, of that liberal Roman church—already responding in their own "vulgar tongue," to an office said in the original, liturgical Greek: and thus that hymn sung in the early morning, of which Pliny had heard, grew into the service of the Mass.

The Mass, indeed, would seem to have been said continuously from the time of the Apostles. Its details, as one by one they become visible in later history, have already the character of what is ancient and venerable. "We are very old, and ye are young!" they seem to protest, to those who fail to understand

them. Ritual, indeed, like other elements of religion, must grow and cannot be made—grow by the same law of development which has prevailed in all the rest of the moral world. In this particular phase of the religious life, however, that development seems to have been an unusually rapid one, in the subterranean age which preceded Constantine; doubtless, there also, more especially in such time of partial reconciliation as that minor "Peace:" and in the very first days of the final triumph of the church the Mass emerges to general view already substantially complete. Thus did the liturgy of the church grow up, full of consolations for the human soul, and destined, surely, one day, under the sanction of so many ages of human experience, to take exclusive possession of the religious consciousness. "Wisdom" was dealing, as with the dust of creeds and philosophies, so also with the dust of outworn religious usage, like the very spirit of life itself, organising souls and bodies out of the lime and clay of the earth, adopting, in a generous eclecticism, within the church's liberty and as by some providential power in her, as in other matters so in ritual, one thing here another there, from various sources—Gnostic, Jewish, Pagan—to adorn and beautify the greatest act of worship the world has seen—

> Pulchrius ecce nitet renovati gloria fontis!
> Cede vetus numen! novitati cede vetustas!

CHAPTER XXIII.

SAPIENTIA ÆDIFICAVIT SIBI DOMUM.

"Wisdom hath builded herself a house: she hath mingled her wine: she hath also prepared for herself a table."

THE great, favoured ages of imaginative art present instances of the summing up of a whole world of complex associations under some single form, like the *Zeus* of Olympia, or the series of frescoes which commemorate *the Acts of Saint Francis*, at Assisi; or like the play of Hamlet or Faust. It was not in an image, or series of images, yet still in a sort of dramatic action, and with the unity of a single appeal to eye and ear, that Marius, about this time, found all his new impressions set forth, regarding what he had already recognised, intellectually, as for him, at least, the most beautiful thing in the world.

To understand the influence over him of what follows you must remember that it was an experience which came in the midst of a deep sense of vacuity in things. The fairest products of the earth seemed to be dropping to pieces, as if in men's very hands, around him; and still, how real was their sorrow,

and his! "Observation of life" had come to be like the constant telling of a sorrowful rosary, day after day; till, as if taking infection from the cloudy sorrow of the mind, the senses also, the eye itself, had grown faint and sick. And now it happened as with the actual morning on which he found himself a spectator of this new thing. The long winter had been a season of unvarying sullenness: at last, on this day he awoke at a sharp flash of lightning in the earliest twilight; and in a little while the heavy rain had filtered the air; the clear light was abroad; and, as though the spring had begun with a sudden leap in the heart of things, the whole scene around him lay like an untarnished picture beneath a sky of delicate blue. Under the spell of his late depression, Marius had suddenly determined to leave Rome for awhile. But desiring first to advertise Cornelius of his movements, and failing to find him in his lodgings, he had ventured, still early in the day, to seek him in the Cecilian villa. Passing through its silent and empty courtyard he loitered for a moment, to admire. Under the clear but immature light of the winter morning after the storm, all the details of form and colour in the old marbles were distinctly visible; and with a sort of sad hardness (so it struck him), amid their beauty; in them, and in all other details of the scene—the cypresses, the bunches of pale daffodils in the grass, the curves of the purple hills of Tusculum, with the drifts of virgin snow still lying in their hollows.

The little open door, through which he passed from the courtyard, admitted him into what was plainly the vast *Lararium*, or domestic sanctuary, of the Cecilian family, transformed in many particulars, but still richly decorated, and retaining much of its ancient furniture in costly stone and metal-work. The peculiar half-light of dawn seemed to be lingering beyond its hour upon its solemn marble walls; and here, though at that moment in absolute silence, a great company of people was assembled. In that brief period of peace (the church emerging for awhile from her jealously guarded subterranean life) the severity of her earlier rule of exclusion had been somewhat relaxed; and so it came to pass that, on this morning, Marius saw for the first time the wonderful spectacle—wonderful above all in its evidential power—of those who believe.

There were noticeable, among those assembled, great varieties of rank, of age, of personal type. The Roman *ingenuus*, with the white toga and gold ring, stood side by side with his slave: and the air of the whole company was, above all, a grave one, an air of recollection. Coming thus unexpectedly upon this large assembly, so entirely united, in a silence so profound, for some purpose unknown to him, Marius felt for a moment as if he had stumbled by chance upon some great conspiracy. Yet that could scarcely be, for the people here collected might have figured as the earliest handsel, or pattern, of a new world, from the very face of which discontent had passed

away. Corresponding to the variety of human type there present, was the various expression of every type of human sorrow assuaged. What desire, and fulfilment of desire, had wrought so pathetically in the faces of these ranks of aged men and women of humble condition? Those young men, bent down so discreetly on the details of their sacred service, had faced life and were glad, by some science, or light of knowledge they had, to which there was certainly no parallel in the older world. Was some credible message from beyond "the flaming rampart of the world"—a message of hope, regarding the place of men's souls and their interest in the sum of things—already moulding their very bodies, and looks and voices, now and here? At least, there was a kindling flame at work in them, which seemed to make everything else Marius had ever known look comparatively vulgar and mean. There were the children, above all—troops of children—who reminded him of those pathetic children's graves, like cradles or garden-beds, he had noticed in his first visit to these places; and they more than satisfied the odd curiosity he had then felt about them, wondering in what quaintly expressive forms they might come forth into the daylight, if awakened from their sleep. Children of the Catacombs, some but "a span long," with features not so much beautiful as heroic (that world of new, refining sentiment having set its seal even on childhood, like everything else in Rome, naturally heroic), they retained, certainly, no spot or trace of anything *subterranean* this

morning, in the alacrity of their worship—as ready as if they had been at their play—stretching forth their hands, crying, chanting in a resonant voice, and with boldly upturned faces, *Christe Eleison!*

For the silence—silence, amid those lights of early morning, to which Marius had always been constitutionally impressible, as having in them a certain reproachful austerity—was broken suddenly by resounding cries of *Kyrie Eleison! Christe Eleison!* repeated again and again alternately, until the bishop, rising from his throne, made sign that this prayer should cease. But the voices burst out again soon afterwards in a richer and more varied melody, though still antiphonal; the men, the women and children, the deacons and the congregation, answering each other, as in a Greek chorus. But, again, with what a novelty of poetic accent; what a genuine expansion of heart; what profound intimations for the intellect, as the meaning of the words grew upon him! The "hymn," of which Pliny had heard something, had grown into this. *Cum grandi affectu et compunctione dicatur*—says an ancient eucharistic order; and certainly, the mystic tone of this praying and singing was one with the expression of deliverance, of grateful assurance and sincerity, upon the faces of those assembled. As if some profound correction, and regeneration of the body by the spirit, had been begun, and already gone a great way, the countenances of men, women, and children had a brightness upon them which he could fancy reflected upon himself—an amenity, a mystic

amiability and unction, which found its way, most readily of all, to the hearts of children themselves. The religious poetry of those Hebrew psalms—*Benedixisti Domine terram tuam: Dixit Dominus Domino meo, sede a dextris meis*—was in marvellous accord with the lyrical instinct of his own character. Those august hymns, he thought, would remain ever hereafter one of the well-tested powers among things, to soothe and fortify his soul. One could never grow tired of them!

In the old pagan worship there had been little to call out the intelligence. The eloquence of worship, which Marius found here — an eloquence, wherein there were many very various ingredients, of which that singing was only one—presented, as he gradually came to see, a fact, or series of facts, for intellectual reception. This became evident, more especially, in those lections, or sacred readings, which, like the singing, in broken vernacular Latin, occurred at certain intervals, amid the silence of the assembly. There were readings, again with bursts of chanted invocation between for fuller light on a difficult path, in which many a vagrant voice of human philosophy, haunting men's minds from of old, came sounding in clearer tones than had ever belonged to them before; as if lifted, above their natural purpose, into the harmonies of some more masterly system of knowledge. And last of all came a narrative, in a form which every one appeared to know by heart with a thousand tender memories, and which displayed, in all the vividness of a picture for the eye, the mourn-

ful figure of him, towards whom the intention of this whole act of worship was directed—a figure which seemed to have absorbed, like a tincture of deep dyes into his vesture, all that was deep-felt and impassioned in the experiences of the past.

It was the anniversary of his birth as a little child they were celebrating to-day. *Astiterunt reges terræ* —proceeded the *Sequence*, the young men on the steps of the altar responding in deep, clear, antiphon or chorus—

> Astiterunt reges terræ—
> Adversus sanctum puerum tuum, Jesum:
> Nunc, Domine, da servis tuis loqui verbum tuum—
> Et signa fieri, per nomen sancti pueri Jesu!

And the proper action of the rite itself, like a half-opened book to be read by the duly initiated mind, took up those suggestions, and carried them on into the present, as having reference to a power still efficacious, and in action among the people there assembled, in some mystic sense. The whole office, indeed, with its interchange of lections, hymns and silences, was itself like a single piece of highly composite, dramatic music; a "song of degrees," rising to a climax. Notwithstanding the absence of any definite or central visible image, the entire ceremonial process, like the place in which it was enacted, seemed weighty with symbolical significance, and expressed a single leading motive. It was in the actions of one person that the whole mystery centered. Distinguished among his assistants, who stood ranged in

semicircle around him (themselves parted from the general congregation by *transennæ*, or lattice-work, of pierced white marble) by the extreme fineness or whiteness of his vesture, and the pointed cap with golden ornaments on his head, this person, nevertheless, struck Marius as having something about him like one of the wild shepherds of the *Campagna*.

And yet he had never seen the pontifical character, as he conceived it—*sicut unguentum in capite, descendens in oram vestimenti*—so fully realised, as in the expression, the voice and manner of action, of this novel pontiff, as he took his seat on the white chair placed for him by the young men, and received his long staff into his hand, or moved his hands—hands seeming to be indeed endowed with mysterious, hidden powers—at the *Lavabo*, or at the various benedictions, or to bless certain objects on the table before him, chanting in cadence of a grave sweetness the leading parts of the rite. What profound unction and mysticity! The solemnity of the singing was at its height when he opened his lips. It was as if, a new sort of *rhapsôdos*, he alone possessed the words of the office, and they were flowing fresh from some source of inspiration within him. The table or altar at which he presided, below a canopy of spiral columns, and with the carved palm-branch, standing in the midst of a semicircle of seats for the priests, was in reality the tomb of a youthful "witness," of the family of the Cecilii, who had shed his blood not many years before, and whose relics were still in this place. It was for his sake

that the bishop put his lips so often to the surface before him; the regretful memory of this death intertwining itself, though with a note of triumph, as a matter of special inward significancy, throughout this whole service, which was, besides other things, a commemoration of the whole number of the beloved dead.

It was a sacrifice also, in its essence—a sacrifice, it might seem, like the most primitive, natural, and enduringly significant, of old pagan sacrifices, of the simplest fruits of the earth. And in connexion with this circumstance again, as in the actual stones of the building so in the rite itself, it was not so much a new matter, as a new spirit which Marius observed, moulding, informing, with a new intention, many observances which he did not witness now for the first time. Men and women came to the altar successively, in perfect order; and deposited there, below the marble lattice, their baskets filled with wheat and grapes, their incense, and oil for the lamps of the sanctuary; bread and wine especially—pure wheaten bread, and the pure white wine of the Tusculan vineyards. It was a veritable consecration, hopeful and animating, of the earth's gifts, of all that we can touch and see—of old dead and dark matter itself, somehow redeemed at last, in the midst of a jaded world that had lost the true sense of it, and in strong contrast to the wise emperor's renunciant and impassive attitude towards it. Certain portions of that bread and wine were selected by the bishop; and

thereafter it was with an increasing mysticity and effusion that the rite proceeded. Like an invocation or supplication, full of a powerful *in-breathing* or *empneusis*—the antiphonal singing developed, from this point, into a kind of solemn dialogue between the chief ministrant and the whole assisting company—

SURSUM CORDA!
HABEMUS AD DOMINUM.
GRATIAS AGAMUS DOMINO DEO NOSTRO!—

It was the service, especially, of young men, standing there, in long ranks, arrayed in severe and simple vesture of pure white—a service in which they would seem to be flying for refuge (with their youth itself, as a treasure in their hands to be preserved) to one like themselves, whom they were also ready to worship; to worship, above all in the way of Aurelius, by imitation and conformity to his image. *Adoramus te Christe, quia per crucem tuam redemisti mundum!*—they cried together. So deep was the emotion, that, at moments, it seemed to Marius as if some at least there present perceived the very object of all this pathetic crying himself drawing near. Throughout the rite there had been a growing sense and assurance of one coming—Yes! actually with them now; according to the oft-repeated prayer or affirmation, *Dominus vobiscum!* Some at least were quite sure of it: and the confidence of this remnant fired the hearts, and gave meaning to the bold, ecstatic worship, of all the rest about them.

Helped especially by the suggestions of that mysterious old Hebrew psalmody, to him so new—lection and hymn—and catching therewith a portion of the enthusiasm of those around him, Marius could discern dimly, behind the solemn recitation which now followed (at once a narrative and an invocation or prayer) the most touching image he had ever beheld. It was the image of a young man giving up, one by one, for the greatest of ends, the greatest gifts; parting with himself, and, above all, with the serenity, the deep and divine serenity, of his own mind; yet, from the midst of his distress, crying out upon the greatness of his success, as if foreseeing this very worship. As the centre of the supposed facts, which for these people had become so constraining a motive of activity and hope, this image seemed to propose itself with an overwhelming claim on human gratitude. What Saint Lewis of France discerned, and found so irresistibly touching, through the dimness of many centuries, as a painful thing done for love of him by one he had never seen, was, to them, a thing of yesterday; and their hearts were whole with it: it had the force, among their interests, of an almost recent event in the career of one whom their fathers' fathers might have known. From memories so sublime, yet so close to them, had the narration descended in which these acts of worship centered; and again the names of the more recent dead were mingled with it. And it seemed as if the very dead were aware; to be stirring beneath

the slabs of the sepulchres which lay so near, that they might associate themselves to that enthusiasm —to that exalted worship of Jesus.

One by one, the faithful approached, and received from the chief ministrant portions of the great, white, wheaten cake, he had taken into his hands—*Perducat vos ad vitam æternam!*—he prays, half-silently, as they depart again, after discreet embraces. The Eucharist of those early days was, even more completely than at any later or happier time, an act of thanksgiving; and while what remained was borne away for the reception of the sick, the sustained gladness of the rite reached its highest point in the singing of a hymn: a hymn which was as the spontaneous product of two opposed companies or powers, yet contending accordantly together, accumulating and heightening their witness, and provoking each other's worship, in a kind of sacred rivalry.

Ite! missa est!—cried the young deacons: and Marius departed from that strange scene with the rest. What was this?—Was this what made the way of Cornelius so pleasant through the world? As for himself: the natural soul of worship in him had at last been satisfied as never before. He felt, as he left that place, that he must often hereafter experience a longing memory, a kind of thirst, for all that, over again. Moreover, it seemed to define what he must require of the powers, whatsoever they might be, that had brought him into the world at all, to make him not unhappy in it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A CONVERSATION NOT IMAGINARY.

In cheerfulness is the success of our studies, says Pliny—*studia hilaritate proveniunt.* It was still the habit of Marius, encouraged by his experience that sleep is not only a sedative but the best of stimulants, to seize the morning hours for creation, making profit when he might of the wholesome serenity which followed a dreamless night. "The morning for creation," he would say; "afternoon for the perfecting labour of the file; the evening for reception —the reception of matter from without one, of other men's words and thoughts—matter for our own dreams, or the merely mechanic exercise of the brain, brooding thereon silently, in its dark chambers." It was therefore a rare thing for him to leave home early in the day. One day he had been induced to do so, on the occasion of a visit to Rome of the famous writer Lucian, whom he had been bidden to meet. The breakfast over, he walked away with the learned guest, having offered to be his guide to the lecture-room of a well-known Greek rhetorician and

expositor of the Stoic philosophy, a teacher then much in fashion among the studious youth of Rome. On reaching the place, however, they found the doors closed, with a slip of writing attached, which proclaimed "a holiday;" and the morning being a fine one, they strolled further, along the Appian Way. Mortality, with which the *Queen of Ways*—in reality the favourite cemetery of Rome—was so closely crowded, in every imaginable form of sepulchre, from the tiniest baby-house, to the massive towers out of which the Middle Ages would adapt a fortress, might seem, on a morning like this, to be "smiling through tears." The flower-stalls just beyond the city gates presented to view an array of garlands and posies, fresh enough for a wedding. At one and another of them groups of persons, gravely clad, were making their bargains before starting off to a perhaps distant spot on the highway, to keep a *dies rosationis* (as this was the time of roses) at the grave of a deceased relation. Here and there, an actual funeral procession was slowly on its way, in weird contrast to the gaiety of the hour.

The two companions, of course, read the epitaphs as they strolled along. In one, reminding them of the poet's—*Si lacrimæ prosunt, visis te ostende videri!*—a woman prayed that her lost husband might visit her dreams. Their characteristic note, indeed, was an imploring cry, still to be sought after by the living. "While I live," was the promise of a lover to his dead mistress, "you will receive this homage:

after my death,—who can tell?"—*post mortem nescio.* "If ghosts, my sons, do feel anything after death, my sorrow will be lessened by your frequent coming to me here!"—"This is a *privileged* tomb; to my family and descendants has been conceded the right of visiting this place as often as they please."—"This is an eternal habitation; here lie I; here I shall lie for ever."—"Reader! if you doubt that the soul survives, make your oblation and a prayer for me; and you shall understand!"

The elder of the two readers, certainly, was little affected by those pathetic suggestions. It was long ago that having visited the banks of the Padus, and asked in vain for the poplars which were the sisters of Phaethon, and whose tears were amber, he had once for all arranged for himself a view of the world which excluded all reference to what might lie beyond its "flaming barriers." And at the age of sixty he had no misgivings. His elegant and self-complacent, but far from unamiable, scepticism, long since brought to perfection, never failed him. It surrounded him, as some are surrounded by a magic ring of fine aristocratic manners, with "a rampart," through which he himself never broke, nor permitted any thing or person to break upon him. Gay, animated, content with his old age as it was, the aged student still took a lively interest in studious youth.—Could Marius inform him of any such, now known to him in Rome? What did the young men learn, just then? and how?

In answer, Marius became fluent concerning the

promise of one young student, the son, as it presently appeared, of parents of whom Lucian himself knew something: and soon afterwards the lad was seen coming along briskly—a lad with gait and figure well enough expressive of the sane mind in the healthy body, though a little slim and worn of feature, and with a pair of eyes expressly designed, it might seem, for fine glancings at the stars. At the sight of Marius he paused suddenly, and with a modest blush on recognising his companion, who straightway took with the youth, so prettily enthusiastic, the freedom of an old friend.

In a few moments the three were seated together, immediately above the fragrant borders of a rose-farm, on the marble bench of one of the *exhedræ* for the use of foot-passengers at the roadside, from which they could overlook the grand, earnest prospect of the *Campagna*, and enjoy the air. Fancying that the lad's plainly written enthusiasm had induced in the elder speaker a somewhat greater fervour than was usual with him, Marius listened to the conversation which follows—

"Ah! Hermotimus! Hurrying to lecture!—if I may judge by your pace, and that volume in your hand. You were thinking hard as you came along, moving your lips and waving your arm: some fine speech you were pondering, some knotty question or viewy doctrine—not to be idle for a moment, to be making progress in philosophy, even on your way to the schools. To-day, however, you need go no further. We read a notice at the schools that

there would be no lecture. Stay therefore, and talk awhile with us.

—With pleasure, Lucian.—Yes! I was ruminating yesterday's conference. One must not lose a moment. *Life is short and art is long!* And it was of the art of medicine, that was first said—a thing so much easier than divine philosophy, to which one can hardly attain in a lifetime, unless one be ever wakeful, ever on the watch. And here the hazard is no little one—By the attainment of a true philosophy to attain happiness; or, having missed both, to perish, as one of the vulgar herd.

—The prize is a great one, Hermotimus! and you must needs be near it, after these months of toil, and with that scholarly pallor of yours. Unless, indeed, you have already laid hold upon it, and kept us in the dark.

—How could that be, Lucian? Happiness, as Hesiod says, abides very far hence; and the way to it is long and steep and rough. I see myself still at the beginning of my journey; still but at the mountain's foot. I am trying with all my might to get forward. What I need is a hand, stretched out to help me.

—And is not the master sufficient for that? Could he not, like Zeus in Homer, let down to you, from that high place, a golden cord, to draw you up thither, to himself and to that Happiness, to which he ascended so long ago?

—The very point Lucian! If it had depended

on him I should long ago have been caught up. 'Tis I am wanting.

—Well! keep your eye fixed on the journey's end, and the happiness there above, with confidence in his goodwill.

—Ah! there are many who start cheerfully on the journey and proceed a certain distance, but lose heart when they light on the obstacles of the way. Only, those who endure to the end do come to the mountain's top, and thereafter live in Happiness:—live a wonderful manner of life, seeing all other people from that great height no bigger than tiny ants.

—What little fellows you make of us—less than the pygmies—down in the dust here. Well! we, 'the vulgar herd,' as we creep along, will not forget you in our prayers, when you are seated up there above the clouds, whither you have been so long hastening. But tell me, Hermotimus!—when do you expect to arrive there?

—Ah! that I know not. In twenty years, perhaps, I shall be really on the summit.—A great while! you think. But then, again, the prize I contend for is a great one.

—Perhaps! But as to those twenty years—that you will live so long.—Has the master assured you of that? Is he a prophet as well as a philosopher? For I suppose you would not endure all this, upon a mere chance—toiling day and night, though it might happen that just ere the last step, Destiny

seized you by the foot and plucked you thence, with your hope still unfulfilled.

—Hence, with these ill-omened words, Lucian! Were I to survive but for a day, I should be happy, having once attained wisdom.

—How?—Satisfied with a single day, after all those labours?

—Yes! one blessed moment were enough!

—But again, as you have never been thither, how know you that happiness is to be had up there, at all—the happiness that is to make all this worth while?

—I believe what the master tells me. Of a certainty he knows, being now far above all others.

—And what was it he told you about it? Is it riches, or glory, or some indescribable pleasure?

—Hush! my friend! All those are nothing in comparison of the life there!

—What, then, shall those who come to the end of this discipline—what excellent thing shall they receive, if not these?

—Wisdom, the absolute goodness and the absolute beauty, with the sure and certain knowledge of all things—how they are. Riches and glory and pleasure—whatsoever belongs to the body—they have cast from them: stripped bare of all that, they mount up, even as Hercules, consumed in the fire, became a god. He too cast aside all that he had of his earthly mother, and bearing with him the divine element, pure and undefiled, winged his way to heaven from

the discerning flame. Even so do they, detached from all that others prize, by the burning fire of a true philosophy, ascend to the highest degree of Happiness.

—Strange! And do they never come down again from the heights to help those whom they left below? Must they, when they be once come thither, there remain for ever, laughing, as you say, at what other men prize?

—More than that! They whose initiation is entire are subject no longer to anger, fear, desire, regret. Nay! They scarcely feel at all.

—Well! as you have leisure to-day, why not tell an old friend in what way you first started on your philosophic journey? For, if I might, I should like to join company with you from this very day.

—If you be really willing, Lucian! you will learn in no long time your advantage over all other people. They will seem but as children, so far above them will be your thoughts.

—Well! Be you my guide! It is but fair. But tell me—Do you allow learners to contradict, if anything is said which they don't think right?

—No, indeed! Still, if you wish, oppose your questions. In that way you will learn more easily.

—Let me know, then—Is there one only way which leads to a true philosophy—your own way—the way of the Stoics: or is it true, as I have heard, that there are many ways of approaching it?

—Yes! Many ways! There are the Stoics, and

the Peripatetics, and those who call themselves after Plato: there are the enthusiasts for Diogenes, and Antisthenes, and the followers of Pythagoras, besides others.

—It was true, then. But again, is what they say the same or different?

—Very different.

—Yet the truth, I conceive, would be one and the same, from all of them. Answer me then—In what, or whom, did you confide when you first betook yourself to philosophy, and seeing so many doors open to you, passed them all by and went in to the Stoics, as if there alone lay the way of truth? What token had you? Forget, please, all you are to-day—halfway, or more, on the philosophic journey: answer me as you would have done then, a mere outsider as I am now.

—Willingly! It was there the great majority went! 'Twas by that I judged it to be the better way.

—A majority how much greater than the Epicureans, the Platonists, the Peripatetics? You, doubtless, counted them respectively, as with the votes in a scrutiny.

—No! But this was not my only motive. I heard it said by every one that the Epicureans were soft and voluptuous, the Peripatetics avaricious and quarrelsome, and Plato's followers puffed up with pride. But of the Stoics, not a few pronounced that they were true men, that they knew everything, that theirs

was the royal road, the one road, to wealth, to wisdom, to all that can be desired.

—Of course those who said this were not themselves Stoics: you would not have believed them—still less their opponents. They were the vulgar, therefore.

—True! But you must know that I did not trust to others exclusively. I trusted also to myself—to what I saw. I saw the Stoics going through the world after a seemly manner, neatly clad, never in excess, always collected, ever faithful to the *mean* which all pronounce *golden*.

—You are trying an experiment on me. You would fain see how far you can mislead me as to your real ground. The kind of probation you describe is applicable, indeed, to works of art, which are rightly judged by their appearance to the eye. There is something in the comely form, the graceful drapery, which tells surely of the hand of Pheidias or Alcamenes. But if philosophy is to be judged by outward appearances, what would become of the blind man, for instance, unable to observe the attire and gait of your friends the Stoics?

—It was not of the blind I was thinking.

—Yet there must needs be some common criterion in a matter so important to all. Put the blind, if you will, beyond the privileges of philosophy; though they perhaps need that inward vision more than all others. But can those who are not blind, be they as keen-sighted as you will, collect a single fact of

mind from a man's attire, from anything outward?—Understand me! You attached yourself to these men—did you not?—because of a certain love you had for the mind in them, the thoughts they had, desiring the mind in you to be improved thereby?

—Assuredly!

—How, then, did you find it possible, by the sort of signs you just now spoke of, to distinguish the true philosopher from the false? Matters of that kind are not wont so to reveal themselves. They are but hidden mysteries, hardly to be guessed at through the words and acts which may in some sort be conformable to them. You, however, it would seem, can look straight into the heart in men's bosoms, and acquaint yourself with what really passes there.

—You are making sport of me, Lucian! In truth, it was with God's help I made my choice, and I don't repent it.

—And still you refuse to tell me, to save me from perishing in that 'vulgar herd.'

—Because nothing I can tell you would satisfy you.

—You are mistaken, my friend! But since you deliberately conceal the thing, grudging me, as I suppose, that true philosophy which would make me equal to you, I will try, if it may be, to find out for myself the exact criterion in these matters—how to make a perfectly safe choice. And, do you listen.

—I will; there may be something worth knowing in what you will say.

—Well!—only don't laugh if I seem a little

fumbling in my efforts. The fault is yours, in refusing to share your lights with me. Let Philosophy, then, be like a city—a city whose citizens within it are a happy people, as your master would tell you, having lately come thence, as we suppose. All the virtues are theirs, and they are little less than gods. Those acts of violence which happen among us are not to be seen in their streets. They live together in one mind, very seemly; the things which beyond anything else cause men to contend against each other, having no place among them. Gold and silver, pleasure, vainglory, they have long since banished, as being unprofitable to the commonwealth; and their life is an unbroken calm, in liberty, equality, an equal happiness.

—And is it not reasonable that all men should desire to be of a city such as that, and take no account of the length and difficulty of the way thither, so only they may one day become its freemen?

—It might well be the business of life:—leaving all else, forgetting one's native country here, unmoved by the tears, the restraining hands, of parents or children, if one had them—only bidding them follow the same road; and if they would not or could not, shaking them off, leaving one's very garment in their hands if they took hold on us, to start off straightway for that happy place! For there is no fear, I suppose, of being shut out if one came thither naked. I remember, indeed, long ago an aged man related to me how things passed there, offering him-

self to be my leader, and enrol me on my arrival in the number of the citizens. I was but fifteen—certainly very foolish: and it may be that I was then actually within the suburbs, or at the very gates, of the city. Well, this aged man told me, among other things, that all the citizens were wayfarers from afar. Among them were barbarians and slaves, poor men—aye! and cripples—all indeed who truly desired that citizenship. For the only legal conditions of enrolment were—not wealth, nor bodily beauty, nor noble ancestry—things not named among them—but intelligence, and the desire for moral beauty, and earnest labour. The last comer, thus qualified, was made equal to the rest: master and slave, patrician, plebeian, were words they had not—in that blissful place. And believe me, if that blissful, that beautiful place, were set on a hill visible to all the world, I should long ago have journeyed thither. But, as you say, it is far off: and one must needs find out for oneself the road to it, and the best possible guide. And I find a multitude of guides, who press on me their services, and protest, all alike, that they have themselves come thence. Only, the roads they propose are many, and towards adverse quarters. And one of them is steep and stony, and through the beating sun; and the other is through green meadows, and under grateful shade, and by many a fountain of water. But howsoever the road may be, at each one of them stands a credible guide; he puts out his hand and would have

you come his way. All other ways are wrong, all other guides false. Hence my difficulty!—The number and variety of the ways! For you know, *There is but one road that leads to Corinth.*

—Well! If you go the whole round, you will find no better guides than those. If you wish to get to Corinth, you will follow the traces of Zeno and Chrysippus. It is impossible otherwise.

—Yes! The old, familiar language! Were one of Plato's fellow-pilgrims here, or a follower of Epicurus—or fifty others—each would tell me that I should never get to Corinth except in his company. One must therefore credit all alike, which would be absurd; or, what is far safer, distrust all alike, until one has discovered the truth. Suppose now, that, being as I am, ignorant which of all philosophers is really in possession of truth, I chose your sect, relying on yourself—my friend, indeed, yet still acquainted only with the way of the Stoics: and that then some divine power brought Plato, and Aristotle, and Pythagoras, and the others, back to life again. Well! They would come round about me, and put me on my trial for my presumption, and say—'In whom was it you confided when you preferred Zeno and Chrysippus to me?—and me?—masters of far more venerable age than those, who are but of yesterday; and though you have never held any discussion with us, nor made trial of our doctrine? It is not thus that the law would have judges do—listen to one party and refuse to let the other speak for himself.

If judges act thus, there may be an appeal to another tribunal.' What should I answer? Would it be enough to say—'I trusted my friend Hermotimus?' —'We know not Hermotimus, nor he us,' they would tell me; adding, with a smile, 'your friend thinks he may believe all our adversaries say of us, whether in ignorance or in malice. Yet if he were umpire in the games, and if he happened to see one of our wrestlers, by way of a preliminary exercise, knock to pieces an antagonist of mere empty air, he would not thereupon pronounce him a victor. Well! don't let your friend Hermotimus suppose, in like manner, that his teachers have really prevailed over us in those battles of theirs, fought with our mere shadows. That, again, were to be like children, lightly overthrowing their own card-castles; or like boy-archers, who cry out when they hit the target of straw. The Persian and Scythian bowmen, as they speed along, can pierce a bird on the wing.'

—Let us leave Plato and the others at rest. It is not for me to contend against them. Let us rather search out together if the truth of Philosophy be as I say. Why summon the athletes, and archers from Persia?

—Yes! let them go, if you think them in the way. And now do you speak! You really look as if you had something wonderful to deliver.

—Well then, Lucian! to me it seems quite possible for one who has learned the doctrines of the Stoics only, to attain from those a knowledge of the truth,

without proceeding to inquire into all the various tenets of the others. Look at the question in this way. If one told you that twice two make four, would it be necessary for you to go the whole round of the arithmeticians, to see whether any one of them will say that twice two make five, or seven? Would you not see at once that the man tells the truth?

—At once.

—Why then do you find it impossible that one who has fallen in with the Stoics only, in their enunciation of what is true, should adhere to them, and seek after no others; assured that four could never be five, even if fifty Platos, fifty Aristotles said so?

—You are beside the point, Hermotimus! You are likening open questions to principles universally received. Have you ever met any one who said that twice two make five, or seven?

—No! only a madman would say that.

—And have you ever met, on the other hand, a Stoic and an Epicurean who were agreed upon the beginning and the end, the principle and the final cause, of things? Never! Then your parallel is false. We are inquiring to which of the sects philosophic truth belongs, and you seize on it by anticipation, and assign it to the Stoics, alleging, what is by no means clear, that it is they for whom twice two make four. But the Epicureans, or the Platonists, might say that it is they, in truth, who make two and two equal four, while you make them five or seven. Is it not so, when you think *virtue* the only good, and

the Epicureans *pleasure;* when you hold all things to be *material*, while the Platonists admit something *im-material?* As I said, you resolve offhand, in favour of the Stoics, the very point which needs a critical decision. If it is clear beforehand that the Stoics alone make two and two equal four, then the others must hold their peace. But so long as that is the very point of debate, we must listen to all sects alike, or be well-assured that we shall seem but partial in our judgment.

—I think, Lucian! that you do not altogether understand my meaning. To make it clear, then, let us suppose that two men have entered a temple, of Æsculapius—say; or Bacchus: and that afterwards one of the sacred vessels is found to be missing. And the two men must be searched to see which of them has hidden it under his garment. For it is certainly in the possession of one or the other of them. Well! if it be found on the first there will be no need to search the second; if it is not found on the first, then the other must have it; and again, there will be no need to search him.

—Yes! So let it be.

—And we too, Lucian! if we have found the holy vessel in possession of the Stoics shall no longer have need to search other philosophers, having attained that we were seeking. Why trouble ourselves further?

—No need, if something had indeed been found, and you knew it to be that lost thing: if, at the least, you could recognise the sacred object when you saw

it. But truly, as the matter now stands, not two persons only have entered the temple, one or the other of whom must needs have taken the golden cup, but a whole crowd of persons. And then, it is not clear what the lost object really is—cup, or flagon, or diadem; for one of the priests avers this, another that; they are not even in agreement as to its material: some will have it to be of brass, others of silver, or gold. It thus becomes necessary to search the garments of all persons who have entered the temple, if the lost vessel is to be recovered. And if you find a golden cup on the first of them, it will still be necessary to proceed in searching the garments of the others; for it is not certain that this cup really belonged to the temple. Might there not be many such golden vessels?—No! we must go on to every one of them, placing all that we find in the midst together, and then make our guess which of all those things may fairly be supposed to be the property of the god. For, again, this circumstance adds greatly to our difficulty, that without exception every one searched is found to have something upon him—cup, or flagon, or diadem, of brass, of silver, of gold: and still, all the while, it is not ascertained which of all those is the sacred thing: and you must still hesitate to pronounce any one of them guilty of the sacrilege —those objects may be their own lawful property: one cause of all this obscurity being, as I think, that there was no inscription on the lost cup, if cup it was. Had the name of the god, or even that of the donor,

been upon it, we should at least have had less trouble, and having detected the inscription we should have ceased to trouble any one else by our search.

—I have nothing to reply to that.

—Hardly anything plausible. So that if we wish to find who it is has the sacred vessel, or who will be our best guide to Corinth, we must needs proceed to every one and examine him with the utmost care, stripping off his garment and considering him closely. Scarcely, even so, shall we come at the truth. And if we are to have a credible adviser regarding this question of philosophy—which of all philosophies one ought to follow—he alone who is acquainted with the *dicta* of every one of them can be such a guide: all others must be inadequate. I would give no credence to them if they lacked information as to one only. If some one introduced a fair person and told us he was the fairest of all men, we should not believe that, unless we knew that he had seen all the people in the world. Fair he might be; but, fairest of all—none could know, unless he had seen all. And we too desire, not a fair one, but the fairest of all. Unless we find him, we shall think we have failed. It is no casual beauty that will content us; what we are seeking after is that supreme beauty which must of necessity be unique.

—What then is one to do, if the matter be really thus? Perhaps you know better than I. All I see is that very few of us would have time to examine all the various sects of philosophy in turn, even if

we began in early life. I know not how it is; but though you seem to me to speak reasonably, yet (I must confess it) you have distressed me not a little by this exact exposition of yours. I was unlucky in coming out to-day, and in my falling in with you, who have thrown me into utter perplexity by your proof that the discovery of truth is impossible, just as I seemed to be on the point of attaining my hope.

—Blame your parents, my child, not me! Or rather, blame mother Nature herself, for giving us but seventy or eighty years instead of making us as long-lived as Tithonus. For my part, I have but led you from premise to conclusion.

—Nay! you are a mocker! I know not wherefore, but you have a grudge against philosophy; and it is your entertainment to make a jest of her lovers.

—Ah! Hermotimus! what the Truth may be, you philosophers may be able to tell better than I. But so much at least I know of her, that she is one by no means pleasant to those who hear her speak: in the matter of pleasantness, she is far surpassed by Falsehood: and Falsehood has the pleasanter countenance. She, nevertheless, being conscious of no alloy within, discourses with boldness to all men, who therefore have little love for her. See how angry you are now because I have stated the truth about certain things of which we are both alike enamoured —that they are hard to come by. It is as if you had

fallen in love with a statue and hoped to win its favour, thinking it a human creature; and I, understanding it to be but an image of brass or stone, had shown you, as a friend, that your love was impossible, and thereupon you had conceived that I bore you some ill-will.

—But still, does it not follow from what you said, that we must renounce philosophy and pass our days in idleness?

—When did you hear me say that? I did but assert that if we are to seek after philosophy, whereas there are many ways professing to lead thereto, we must with much exactness distinguish them.

—Well, Lucian! that we must go to all the schools in turn, and test what they say, if we are to choose the right one, is perhaps reasonable; but surely ridiculous, unless we are to live as many years as the Phœnix, to be so lengthy in the trial of each; as if it were not possible to learn the whole by the part! They say that Pheidias, when he was shown one of the talons of a lion, computed the stature and age of the animal it belonged to, modelling a complete lion upon the standard of a single part of it. You too would recognise a human hand were the rest of the body concealed. Even so with the schools of philosophy:—the leading doctrines of each might be learned in an afternoon. That over-exactness of yours, which requires so long a time, is by no means necessary for making the better choice.

—You are forcible, Hermotimus! with this theory

of *The Whole by the Part.* Yet, methinks, I heard you but now propound the contrary. But tell me; would Pheidias when he saw the lion's talon have known that it was a lion's, if he had never seen the animal? Surely, the cause of his recognising the part was his knowledge of the whole. There is a way of choosing one's philosophy even less troublesome than yours. Put the names of all the philosophers into an urn. Then call a little child, and let him draw the name of the philosopher you shall follow all the rest of your days.

—Nay! be serious with me. Tell me; did you ever buy wine?

—Surely.

—And did you first go the whole round of the wine-merchants, tasting and comparing their wines?

—By no means.

—No! You were contented to order the first good wine you found at your price. By tasting a little you ascertained the quality of the whole cask. How if you had gone to each of the merchants in turn, and said, 'I wish to buy a *cotylé* of wine. Let me drink out the whole cask. Then I shall be able to tell which is best, and where I ought to buy.' Yet this is what you would do with the philosophies. Why drain the cask when you might taste, and see?

—How slippery you are; how you escape from one's fingers! Still, you have given me an advantage, and are in your own trap.

—How so?

—Thus! You take a common object known to every one, and make *wine* the figure of a thing which presents the greatest variety in itself, and about which all men are at variance, because it is an unseen and difficult thing. I hardly know wherein philosophy and wine are alike unless it be in this, that the philosophers exchange their ware for money, like the wine-merchants; some of them with a mixture of water or worse, or giving short measure. However, let us consider your parallel. The wine in the cask, you say, is of one kind throughout. But have the philosophers—has your own master even—but one and the same thing only to tell you, every day and all days, on a subject so manifold? Otherwise, how can you know the whole by the tasting of one part? The whole is not the same—Ah! and it may be that God has hidden the good wine of philosophy at the bottom of the cask. You must drain it to the end if you are to find those drops of divine sweetness you seem so much to thirst for! Yourself, after drinking so deeply, are still but at the beginning, as you said. But is not philosophy rather like this? Keep the figure of the merchant and the cask: but let it be filled, not with wine, but with every sort of grain. You come to buy. The merchant hands you a little of the wheat which lies at the top. Could you tell by looking at that, whether the chick-peas were clean, the lentils tender, the beans full? And then, whereas in selecting our wine we risk only our money; in selecting our

philosophy we risk ourselves, as you told me—might ourselves sink into the dregs of 'the vulgar herd.' Moreover, while you may not drain the whole cask of wine by way of tasting, Wisdom grows no less by the depth of your drinking. Nay! if you take of her, she is increased thereby.

And then there is another similitude I have to propose, as regards this tasting of philosophy. Don't think that I blaspheme her if I say that it may be as with some deadly poison, hemlock or aconite. These too, though they cause death, yet kill not if one tastes but a minute portion. You would suppose that the tiniest particle must be sufficient.

—Be it as you will, Lucian! One must live a hundred years—one must sustain all this labour—otherwise, philosophy is unattainable.

—Not so! Though there were nothing strange in that; if it be true, as you said at first, that *Life is short and art is long*. But now, you take it hard that we are not to see you this very day, before the sun goes down, a Chrysippus, a Pythagoras, a Plato.

—You overtake me, Lucian! and drive me into a corner; I believe, in jealousy of heart, because I have made some progress in doctrine whereas you have neglected yourself.

—Well! Don't attend to me! Treat me as a Corybant, a fanatic: and do you go forward on this road of yours. Finish the journey in accordance with the view you had of these matters at the beginning of it. Only, be assured that my judgment on it will

remain unchanged. Reason still says, that without criticism, without a clear, exact, unbiassed intelligence to try them, all those theories—all things—will have been seen in vain. 'To that end,' she tells us, 'much time is necessary, many delays of judgment, a cautious gait, repeated inspection.' And we are not to regard the outward appearance, or the reputation of wisdom, in any of the speakers; but like the judges of Areopagus, who try their causes in the darkness of the night, look only to what they *say*.

—Philosophy, then, is impossible, or possible only in another life!

—Hermotimus! I grieve to tell you that all that even, may be found insufficient. After all, we may deceive ourselves in the belief that we have found something:—like the fishermen! Again and again they let down the net. At last they feel something heavy, and with vast labour draw up, not a load of fish, but only a pot full of sand, or a great stone.

—I don't understand what you mean by the net. It is plain that you have caught me in it.

—Try to get out! You can swim as well as another. We may go to all philosophers in turn and make trial of them. Still, I for my part, hold it by no means certain that any one of them really possesses what we seek. The truth may be a thing that not one of them has found. You have twenty beans in your hand, and you bid ten persons guess how many: one says five, another fifteen; it is possible that one of them may tell the true number; but it is not impos-

sible that all may be wrong. So it is with the philosophers. All alike are in search of Happiness—what kind of thing it is. One says one thing, one another: it is pleasure; it is virtue;—what not? And Happiness may indeed be one of those things. But it is possible also that it may be still something else, different and distinct from them all.

—What is that?—There is something, I know not how, very sad and disheartening in what you say. We seem to have come round in a circle to the spot whence we started, and to our first incertitude. Ah! Lucian, what have you done to me? You have proved my priceless pearl to be but ashes, and all my past labour to have been in vain.

—Reflect, my friend, that you are not the first person who has thus failed of the good thing he hoped for. All philosophers, so to speak, are but fighting about the 'ass's shadow.' To me you seem like one who should weep, and reproach fortune because he is not able to climb up into heaven, or go down into the sea by Sicily and come up at Cyprus, or sail on wings in one day from Greece to India. And the true cause of his trouble is that he has based his hope on what he has seen in a dream, or his own fancy has put together; without previous thought whether what he desires is in itself attainable and within the compass of human nature. Even so, methinks, has it happened with you. As you dreamed, so largely, of those wonderful things, came Reason, and woke you up from sleep, a little roughly:

and then you are angry with Reason, your eyes being still but half open, and find it hard to shake off sleep for the pleasure of what you saw therein. Only, don't be angry with me, because, as a friend, I would not suffer you to pass your life in a dream, pleasant perhaps, but still only a dream—because I wake you up and demand that you should busy yourself with the proper business of life, and send you to it possessed of common sense. What your soul was full of just now is not very different from those Gorgons and Chimæras and the like, which the poets and the painters construct for us, fancy-free :—things which never were, and never will be, though many believe in them, and all like to see and hear of them, just because they are so strange and odd.

And you too, methinks, having heard from some such maker of marvels of a certain woman of a fairness beyond nature—beyond the Graces, beyond Venus Urania herself—asked not if he spoke truth, and whether this woman be really alive in the world, but straightway fell in love with her; as they say that Medea was enamoured of Jason in a dream. And what more than anything else seduced you into that passion, and others like you, for a vain idol of the fancy, is, that he who told you about that fair woman, from the very moment when you first believed that what he said was true, brought forward all the rest in consequent order. Upon her alone your eyes were fixed; by her he led you along, when once you had given him a hold upon you—led you along the

straight road, as he said, to the beloved one. All was easy after that. None of you asked again whether it was the true way; following one after another, like sheep led by the green bough in the hand of the shepherd. He moved you hither and thither with his finger, as easily as water spilt on a table!

My friend! Be not so lengthy in preparing the banquet, lest you die of hunger! I saw one who poured water into a mortar, and ground it with all his might with a pestle of iron, fancying he did a thing useful and necessary: but it remained water only, none the less."

Just there the conversation broke off suddenly, and the disputants parted. The horses had been brought for Lucian. The boy went home, and Marius onward, to visit a friend whose abode lay further. As he returned to Rome towards evening the melancholy aspect, natural to a city of the dead, had triumphed over the superficial gaudiness of the early day. He could almost have fancied Canidia there, picking her way among the rickety lamps, to rifle some ruined or neglected tomb; for these tombs were not all equally well cared for (*Post mortem nescio!*) and it had been one of the pieties of Aurelius to frame a very severe law to prevent the defacing of the ancient monuments of the dead. There seemed to Marius to be some new meaning in that terror of isolation, of being left alone in these places, of which the sepulchral inscriptions were so full. A blood-red sunset was

dying angrily, and its wild glare upon the shadowy objects about him concurred with his own fancy, in weaving all the associations of this famous way and its deeply graven marks of immemorial travel (together with all the associations of the morning's enthusiastic conference on the true way of that other sort of travelling) around a very melancholy image, almost ghastly in the traces of its great sorrows—bearing along for ever, on bleeding feet, the instrument of its punishment—which was all Marius could recall distinctly of a certain Christian legend he had heard. It was the legend, however, of an encounter upon this very spot, of two wayfarers on the Appian Way, as also upon some very dimly discerned mental journey, altogether different from himself and his late companions—an encounter between Love, literally fainting by the road, and Love "travelling in the greatness of his strength," Love itself, suddenly appearing to sustain that other. It was a strange contrast to anything actually presented in that morning's conversation, yet somehow seemed to recall its very words—"Do they never come down again (he seemed to hear once more that well-modulated voice), Do they never come down again from the heights, to help those whom they left here below?"—"And we too desire, not a fair one, but the fairest of all. Unless we find him, we shall think we have failed."

CHAPTER XXV.

SUNT LACRIMÆ RERUM.

It had become a habit with Marius—one of his modernisms—developed by his assistance at those "conversations" of Aurelius with himself, to keep a register of the movements of his own private thoughts or humours; not continuously indeed, but sometimes for lengthy intervals, during which it was no idle self-indulgence, but a necessity of his intellectual life, to "confess himself," with an intimacy, seemingly rare among the ancients; ancient writers, at all events, having been jealous, for the most part, of affording us so much as a glimpse of that interior self, which in many cases would have actually doubled the interest of their objective informations.

"If a particular tutelary or *genius*," writes Marius, "according to old belief, walks beside each one of us through life, mine is certainly a capricious creature! He fills one with wayward, unaccountable, yet quite irresistible humours, and seems always to be in collusion with some outward circumstance, often trivial enough in itself—the condition of the weather, for-

sooth!—the people one meets by chance—the things one happens to overhear them say (veritable ἐνόδιοι σύμβολοι, or omens by the wayside, as the old Greeks fancied), to push on the unreasonable prepossessions of the moment into weighty motives. It was doubtless a quite explicable, physical fatigue which presented me to myself, on awaking this morning, so lack-lustre and trite. But I must needs take my petulance, contrasting it with my accustomed morning hopefulness, as a sign of the ageing of appetite, of a decay in the very capacity of enjoyment. We need some imaginative stimulus, some not impossible ideal which may shape vague hope, and transform it into effective desire, to carry us year after year, without disgust, through the routine-work which is so large a part of life.

"Then, how if appetite, be it for real or ideal, should itself fail one after awhile? Ah, yes! it is of cold always that men die; and on some of us it creeps very gradually. In truth, I can remember just such a lack-lustre condition of feeling once or twice before. But I note, that it was accompanied then by an odd indifference, as the thought of them occurred to me, in regard to the sufferings of others—a kind of callousness, so unusual with me, as at once to mark the humour it accompanied as a palpably morbid one, which would not last. Were those sufferings, great or little, I asked myself then, of more real consequence to them than mine to me, as I remind myself that 'nothing that will end is really long'—long

enough to be thought of importance? But to-day, my own sense of fatigue, the pity I conceive for myself, disposed me strongly to a tenderness for others. For a moment the whole world seemed to present itself as a hospital of sick persons; many of them sick in mind; and all of whom it would be a brutality not to humour.

"Why, when I went out to walk off my wayward fancies, did I confront the very sort of incident (my unfortunate *genius* had surely beckoned it from afar to vex me) likely to irritate it further? A party of men were coming down the street. They were leading a fine race-horse; a handsome beast, but badly hurt somewhere, in the circus, and useless. They were taking him to slaughter; and I think the animal knew it: he cast such looks, as if of mad appeal, to those who passed him, as he went to die in his beauty and pride, for just that one mischance or fault, among the strangers to whom his old owner had deserted him; although the morning air was still so animating, and pleasant to snuff. I could have fancied a soul in the creature, swelling against its luck. And I had come across the incident just when it would figure to me as the very symbol of our poor humanity, in its capacities for pain, its wretched accidents, its imperfect sympathies, which can never quite identify us with each other; the very power of utterance and appeal seeming to fail, in proportion as our sorrows come home to ourselves, are really our own. We are constructed for suffering! What proofs of

it does but one day afford, if we care to note them, as we go—a whole long chaplet of sorrowful mysteries! *Sunt lacrimæ rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.*

"Men's fortunes touch us! The little children of one of those institutions for the support of orphans, now become fashionable among us as memorials of eminent people deceased, are going, in long file, along the street, on their way to a holiday in the country. They halt, and count themselves with an air of triumph, to show that they are all there. Their gay chatter has disturbed a little group of peasants; a young woman and her husband, who have brought the old mother, now past work and witless, to place her in a house provided for such afflicted persons. They are fairly affectionate, but anxious how the thing they have to do may go—hope only that she may permit them to leave her there quietly behind them. And the poor old soul is excited by the noise made by the children, and partly aware of what is going to happen with her. She too begins to count —one, two, three, five—on her trembling fingers, misshapen by a life of toil. 'Yes! yes! and twice five make ten'—they say, to pacify her. It is her last appeal to be taken home again; her proof that all is not yet up with her; that she is, at all events, still as capable as those joyous children.

"At the baths, a party of labourers are at work upon one of the great brick furnaces, in a cloud of black dust. A frail young child has brought food for one of them, and sits apart, waiting till his father

comes—watching the labour, but with a painful distaste for the din and dirt. He is regarding wistfully his own place in the world, prepared there before him. His mind, as he watches, is grown-up for a moment; and he foresees, as it were, in that moment, all the long tale of days, of early awakings, of his own coming life of drudgery at work like this.

"A man comes along carrying a boy whose rough work has already begun—the only child, whose presence beside him sweetened his toil a little. The boy has been badly injured by a fall of brick-work, yet rides boldly with an effort, on his father's shoulders. It will be the way of natural affection to keep him alive as long as possible, though with that miserably shattered body—'Ah! with us still, and feeling our care beside him!'—and yet surely not without a heartbreaking sigh of relief, alike from him and them, when the end comes.

"On the alert for incidents like these, yet of necessity passing them by on the other side, I find it hard to get rid of a sense that I, for one, have failed in love. I could yield to the humour till I seemed to have had my share in those great public cruelties, those shocking legal crimes, like the cold-blooded slaughter, according to law, of the four hundred slaves, one by one, under Nero, because one of their number was thought to have murdered his master. All that, together with the kind of facile apologies which those who had no share in the deed may have made for it, as they went about quietly on their own affairs that

day, seems to come very close to me, as I think over it. And to how many of those now actually around me, whose life is a sore one, must I be indifferent, if I ever perceive the soreness at all? To some, perhaps, the circumstances of my own life may cause me necessarily to be opposed, regarding those interests which actually determine the happiness of theirs. I would that a stronger love might arise in my heart!

"Yet there is plenty of charity in the world. My patron, the Stoic emperor, has even made it fashionable. To celebrate one of his brief returns to Rome from the war lately, over and above a largess of gold pieces to all who would, the public debts were forgiven. He made a nice show of it: for once, the Romans entertained themselves with a good-natured spectacle, and the whole town came to see the great bonfire in the Forum, into which all bonds and evidence of debt were thrown on delivery, by the emperor himself; many private creditors following his example. That was done well enough! Only, what I feel is, that no charity at all can get at a certain natural unkindness which I find in things themselves.

"When I first came to Rome, eager to observe its religion, especially its antiquities of religious usage, I assisted at the most curious, perhaps, of them all, and the most deeply marked with that immobility which is a sort of ideal in the Roman religion. The ceremony took place at a singular spot some miles distant from the city, among the low hills on the bank of the Tiber beyond the Aurelian Gate. There, in a little wood

of venerable trees, piously allowed to have their own way, age after age—ilex and cypress remaining where they fell at last, one over the other, and all caught, in that early May-time, under a riotous tangle of wild clematis—was to be found a magnificent sanctuary, in which the members of the Arval College assembled themselves on certain days. The axe never touched those trees—Nay! it was forbidden to introduce any iron thing whatsoever within the precincts; not only because the deities of those quiet places hate to be disturbed by the noise of iron, but also in memory of that better age—the lost Golden Age—the homely age of the potters, of which the central act of the festival was a commemoration.

"The preliminary ceremonies were long and complicated, but of a character familiar enough. What was peculiar to the time and place was the solemn exposition, after lavation of hands, processions backwards and forwards, and certain changes of vestments, of the identical earthen vessels (veritable relics of the old religion of Numa) out of which the holy Numa himself had eaten and drunk, exposed above a kind of altar, amid a cloud of flowers and incense, and many lights, to the veneration of the credulous or the faithful.

"They were vases or cups of burnt clay, rude in form: and the religious veneration thus offered to them expressed the desire to give honour to a simpler age, before iron had found place in human life—the persuasion that that age was worth remembering, and a hope that it might come again.

"That a Numa, and his age of gold, would return, has been the hope or the dream of some, in every age. Yet if he did come back, or any equivalent of his presence, he could but alleviate, and by no means wholly remove, that root of evil; certainly of sorrow, of outraged human sense, in things, which one must carefully distinguish from all preventible accidents. Death, and the little perpetual daily dyings, which have something of its sting, he must necessarily leave untouched. And, methinks, that were all the rest of man's life framed entirely to his liking, he would straightway begin to sadden himself, over the fate—say, of the flowers! For there is (has come to be since Numa lived perhaps) a capacity for sorrow in his heart, which grows with all the growth, alike of the individual and of the race, in intellectual delicacy and power, and which *will* find its aliment.

"Of that sort of golden age, indeed, one discerns even now a trace, here and there. Often have I maintained that, in this generous southern country at least, Epicureanism is the special philosophy of the poor. How little I myself really need, when people leave me alone, with the intellectual powers at work serenely. The drops of falling water, a few wild flowers with their priceless fragrance, even a few tufts of half-dead leaves, changing colour in the quiet of a room that has but light and shadow in it; these, for a susceptible mind, might well do duty for all the glory of Augustus. I notice often the true character of the fondness of the roughest working-

people for their young children, a delicate appreciation, not only of their serviceable affection, but of their visible graces: and indeed, in this country, the children are almost always worth looking at. I see daily, in fine weather, a child like a delicate nosegay, run to meet the rudest of brick-makers as he comes from work. She is not at all afraid to hang upon his rough hand: and through her, he reaches out to, he makes his own, something out of that great world, so distant from him yet so real, of humanity's refinements. What is of finer soul, or of finer stuff, in things, and demands delicate touching—the delicacy of the little child represents to him that, initiates him into that. There, surely, is a touch of the *secular* gold, of a perpetual age of gold. But then again, think for a moment, with what a hard humour at the nature of things, his struggle for bare life will go on, if the child should happen to die. I saw to-day, under one of the archways of the baths, two children very seriously at play—a fair girl and a perfectly crippled younger brother. Two toy chairs and a little table, and sprigs of fir set upright in the sand for a garden! They were playing at housekeeping. Well! the girl thinks her life a perfectly good thing in the love of this crippled brother. But she will have a jealous lover in time; and the boy, though his face is not altogether unpleasant, is after all a hopeless cripple.

"For there is a certain grief in things as they are, in man as he has come to be, as he certainly is, over

and above those griefs of circumstance which are in a measure removable—an inexplicable shortcoming, or misadventure, on the part of nature itself—death, and old age as it must needs be, and that watching of their approach, which makes every stage of life like a dying over and over again. Almost all death is painful, and in every thing that comes to an end a touch of death, and therefore of a wretched coldness struck home to one, of remorse, of loss and parting, of outraged attachments. Given faultless men and women, given a perfect state of society which should have no need to practise on men's susceptibilities for its own selfish ends, adding one turn more to the wheel of the great rack for its own interest or amusement, there would still be this evil in the world, of a certain necessary sorrow and desolation, felt, just in proportion to the moral, the nervous perfection men have reached. And what is needed in the world, over against that, is a certain general, permanent force of compassion—humanity's standing self-pity—as an elementary ingredient of our social atmosphere, if we are to live in it at all. I wonder, sometimes, how man has cajoled himself into the bearing of his burden so far, seeing how every step his labour has won for him, from age to age, in the capacity of apprehension, must needs increase his dejection; as if the increase of knowledge were but the revelation of the radical hopelessness of his position: and I would that there were one even as I, behind this vain show of things!

"At all events, the actual conditions of our life

being as they are, and the capacity for suffering so large a principle in things, and the only principle, always safe, a sympathy with the pain one actually sees, it follows that the constituent practical difference between men will be their capacity for a trained insight into those conditions, their capacity for sympathy; and the future with those who have most of it. And for the present, those who have much of it, have (I tell myself) something to hold by, even in the dissolution of a world, or in that dissolution of self, which is, for every one, no less than the dissolution of the world it represents for him. Nearly all of us, I suppose, have had our moments, in which any effective sympathy for us has seemed impossible, and our pain in life a mere stupid outrage upon us, like some overwhelming physical violence; and we could seek refuge from it, at best, only in a mere general sense of goodwill, somewhere perhaps. And then, to one's surprise, the discovery of that goodwill, if it were only in a not unfriendly animal, may seem to have explained, and actually justified, the existence of our pain at all. Certainly, there have been occasions when I have felt that if others cared for me as I did for them, it would be, not so much a solace of loss, as an equivalent for it—a certain real thing in itself—a touching of that absolute ground among all the changes of phenomena, such as our philosophers of late have professed themselves quite unable to find. In the mere clinging of human creatures to each other, nay! in one's own solitary self-pity, even amidst what

might seem absolute loss, I seem to touch the eternal. A certain very real new thing is evolved in that pitiful contact, which, on a review of all the perplexity of life, satisfies the moral sense, and removes that appearance of unkindness in the soul of things themselves, and assures us that not everything has been in vain.

"And I know not how, but in the thought thus suggested, I seem to take up, and re-knit myself to, a well-remembered hour, when by some gracious accident (it was on a journey), all things about me fell into a more perfect harmony than is their wont. For a moment, all things seemed to be, after all, almost for the best. Through the train of my thoughts, one against another, it was as if I felt the dominance of a person in controversy—a wrestler—with me. Just now, I seem to be at the point where I left off then. My antagonist has closed with me again. A protest comes, out of the very depth and dust of man's radically hopeless position in the world, with the energy of one of those suffering yet prevailing deities, of which old poetry tells. Dared one hope that there is a heart, even as ours, in that divine *Assistant* of one's thoughts—a heart even as mine, behind this vain show of things!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

AH! VOILÀ LES ÂMES QU'IL FALLOIT À LA MIENNE!
Rousseau.

THE charm of its poetry, a poetry of the affections, wonderfully fresh in that threadbare world, would have led Marius, if nothing else had done so, again and again, to Cecilia's house. He found a range of intellectual pleasures, altogether new to him, in the sympathy of that pure and elevated soul. Elevation of soul, generosity, humanity—little by little it came to seem to him as if these existed nowhere else. The sentiment of maternity, above all, as he understood it there, seemed to reinforce, as with the sanction of some divine pattern of it higher still, the claims of that, and of all natural feeling everywhere, down even to the sheep bleating on the hills, nay! even to the mother-wolf, in her hungry cave. He saw its true place in the world given at last, to the bare capacity for suffering in any creature, however feeble or seemingly useless. In this chivalry, this anxious fidelity to what could not help itself, or could hardly dare claim not to be forgotten, which seemed to leave the world's heroism a mere property

of the stage, what a contrast to the hard contempt of death, of pain, of glory even, in those discourses of Aurelius!

But if Marius thought at times that some long-cherished desires were here about to blossom for him, in the sort of home he had sometimes pictured to himself, and the very charm of which would lie in its distinction from random passions; that in this woman to whom children instinctively clung, was the sister at least, he had always longed for; there were also circumstances which reminded him that a certain rule against second marriages, among these people was still of some force; incidents, moreover, which warned his susceptible soul, like omens, not to mix together the flesh and the spirit, nor to make the matter of a heavenly banquet serve for earthly meat and drink.

One day he found Cecilia occupied with the burial of one of the children of her household. It was on the tiny brow of such a child, as he now heard, that the Christian new light had first come to them—in the light of mere physical life, kindling again there, when the child was dead, or supposed to be dead. The aged servant of Christ had arrived in the midst of their noisy grief; and mounting to the little chamber where it lay, had returned, not long afterwards, with the child stirring in his arms as he descended the stair rapidly; bursting open the tightly-wound folds of its shroud and scattering the flowers out of them, as life kindled again through its limbs.

Old Roman common sense had taught people to occupy their thoughts as little as might be with children who died young. Here, to-day, in this curious house, all thoughts were tenderly bent on the little waxen figure; yet with a kind of exultation and joy, notwithstanding the loud weeping of the mother. The other children, its late companions, broke with it, suddenly, into the place where its black bed was lying open to receive it. Pushing away the grim *fossors*, they ranged themselves around it in order, and chanted that old psalm of theirs—*Laudate pueri dominum!* Dead children, children's graves—Marius had been always half aware of an old superstitious fancy in his mind concerning them; as if in coming near them he came near the failure of some lately-born hope or purpose of his own. And now, perusing intently the expression with which Cecilia bent upon all this, and returned afterwards to the house, he felt that he too had had to-day his funeral of a little child. But it had always been his policy, through all his pursuit of "experience," to fly in time from any too disturbing passion, likely to quicken his pulses beyond the point at which the quiet work of life was practicable. Had he after all been taken unawares, so that it was no longer possible to fly? At least, during the journey he took, by way of testing the existence of any chain about him, he found a certain disappointment at his heart, greater than he could have anticipated; and as he passed over the crisp leaves, nipped off in multitudes by the

first sudden cold of winter, he felt that the mental atmosphere within himself was perceptibly colder.

Yet it was, finally, a quite successful resignation which he achieved, on a review, after his manner, during that absence, of loss and gain. The image of Cecilia seemed already to have become like some matter of history or poetry, or a picture on the wall. And on his return to Rome there had been a rumour among those people of things which certainly did not speak of any merely tranquil loving, but hinted that he had come across a world, the lightest contact with which might make appropriate to him also the precept that "They which have wives be as they that have none."

That was brought home to him, when, in early spring, he ventured once more to listen to the sweet singing of the Eucharist. It breathed more than ever the spirit of a wonderful hope,—hopes more daring than poor, labouring humanity had ever seriously entertained before, though it was plain that a great terror had fallen. Even amid stifled sobbing, as the pathetic words of the psalter relieved the tension of their hearts, the people around him still wore upon their faces that habitual gleam of joy and placid satisfaction. They were still under the influence of an immense gratitude in thinking, even amid their present distress, of the hour of a great deliverance. As he followed again that mystical dialogue, he felt also again, like a mighty breath about him, the influence, the half-realised presence, of a great multitude, as if

thronging along all those awful passages, to hear the sentence of its release from prison; a company which represented nothing less than—*orbis terrarum*—the whole company of mankind. And the special note of the day expressed that relief—a sound new to him, drawn deep from some old Hebrew source, as he conjectured, repeated over and over again, at every pause and movement of the long ceremony.

And then, in its place, by way of a sacred lection, in shocking contrast with the peaceful dignity of all around him, came the *Epistle of the churches of Lyons and Vienne*, to "their sister," the church of Rome. For the "Peace" of the church had been broken—broken, as Marius could not but acknowledge, on the responsibility of the emperor Aurelius himself, following tamely, as a matter of course, the traces of his predecessors, and gratuitously enlisting, against the good as well as the evil of that great pagan world, the strange new heroism of which this singular message was full; and the greatness of which certainly lifted away all merely private regret, inclining one, at last, actually to draw sword for the oppressed, as if in some new order of knighthood—

"The pains which our brethren have borne we are not able fully to tell, for the foe fell upon us with his whole strength. But the grace of God fought for us, set free the weak, and made ready those who, like pillars, were able to bear the weight. These, coming now into close strife with the foe, bore every kind of pang and shame. At the time of the fair which is

held here with a vast crowd, the governor led forth the Martyrs as a show. Holding what was thought great but little, and that the pains of to-day are not deserving to be measured against the glory that shall be made known, these worthy wrestlers went on joyful; their delight and the sweet favour of God mingling in their faces, so that their bonds seemed but a goodly array, and like the golden bracelets of a bride. Filled with the fragrance of Christ, they seemed to some to have been touched with earthly perfumes.

"Vettius Epagathus, though he was very young, because he could not bear to see unjust judgment given against us, vented his anger, and sought to be heard for the brethren, for he was a youth of high place. Whereupon the governor asked him whether he also were a Christian. He confessed in a clear voice, and was added to the Martyrs. But he had the Paraclete within him; as, in truth, he showed by the fulness of his love; glorying in the defence of his brethren, and to give his life for theirs.

"Then was fulfilled the saying of the Lord that the day would come, *when every one that slayeth you will think that he doeth God service.* Most madly did the mob, the governor and the soldiers rage against the handmaiden Blandina, in whom Christ showed that what seems mean among men is of price with Him. For whilst we all, and her earthly mistress, who was herself one of the contending Martyrs, were fearful lest through the weak flesh

she should be unable to profess her faith, Blandina was filled with such power that her tormentors, following upon each other from morning till night, owned that they were overcome, and had no more that they could do to her; admiring that she still breathed after her whole body was torn asunder.

"But this blessed one, in the midst of her witness itself, renewed her strength; and to repeat, *I am Christ's!* was to her rest, refreshment, and relief from pain. As to Alexander, he neither uttered a groan nor any sound at all, but in his heart talked with God. Sanctus, the deacon, also, bearing beyond all measure the many pains devised by them, hoping that they would get something from him, did not even tell his name; but to all questions answered only, *I am Christ's!* For, this he confessed instead of his name, his race, and everything beside. Whence also a strife in torturing him arose between the governor and those tormentors, so that when they had nothing else they could do they set red-hot plates of brass to the most tender parts of his body. But he stood firm in his profession, strengthened and cooled by that stream of living water which flows from Christ. His corpse, a single wound, and that had wholly lost the form of man, was the measure of his pain. But Christ, paining in him, set forth a copy to the rest—that there is nothing fearful, nothing painful, where the love of the Father overcomes. And as all those cruelties were made null through the patience of the Witnesses, they bethought them of other

things; among which was their imprisonment in a dark and most sorrowful place, where many were privily strangled. But though 'void of man's aid, they were filled with power from the Lord, both in body and mind, and strengthened the rest. Also, much joy was in our virgin Mother, the church; for, by means of these, those who had fallen away retraced their steps—were again conceived, were filled again with lively heat, and hastened to make the confession of their faith.

"The holy bishop Pothinus, who was now past ninety years old and weak in body, yet in his heat of soul and his longing for martyrdom, roused what strength he had, and was also cruelly dragged to judgment, and gave witness. Thereupon he suffered many stripes, all thinking it would be a wickedness if they fell short in ill-use of him, for that thus they would avenge their own gods. Hardly drawing breath, he was thrown into prison, and after two days there died.

"After these things their martyrdom was parted into divers manners. Plaiting as it were one crown of many colours and all kinds of flowers, they yielded it to God. Maturus, therefore, Sanctus and Blandina, were led to the wild beasts. And Maturus and Sanctus passed through all the pains of the amphitheatre, as if they had suffered nothing before: or rather, as having in many trials overcome, and now contending for the prize itself, were at last dismissed.

"But Blandina was bound and hung upon a stake, and set forth as food for the assault of the wild beasts. And as she thus seemed to be hanging upon the Cross, by her fiery prayers she imparted much alacrity to those contending Witnesses. For as they looked upon her with the eye of flesh, through her, they saw Him that was crucified. But as none of the beasts would then touch her, she was taken down from the Cross, and sent back to prison for another day: that, though weak and mean, yet clothed with the mighty Wrestler, Christ Jesus, she might by many conquests give heart to her brethren.

"On the last day, therefore, of the shows, she was brought forth again, together with Ponticus, a lad of about fifteen years old. They were brought in every day to behold the pains of the rest. And when they wavered not, the mob was full of rage; pitying neither the youth of the lad, nor the sex of the maiden. Hence, they drave them through the whole round of pain. And Ponticus, taking heart from Blandina, having borne well the whole of those torments, gave up his life. Last of all, the blessed Blandina herself, as a mother that had given life to her children, and sent them like conquerors to the great King, hastened, with joy at the end, to them, as to a marriage-feast; even the foe owning that no woman had ever borne pain, so manifold and great as hers.

"Not even then was their anger appeased; some among them seeking for us pains, if it might be,

yet greater; that the saying might be fulfilled, *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still.* And their rage against the Witnesses took a new form, so that we were in much sorrow for lack of freedom to entrust their bodies to the earth. Neither did the night-time, nor the offer of money, avail us for this matter; but they guarded them by every means, as if it were a great gain to hinder their burial. Therefore, after they had been displayed to view for many days, they were at length burned to ashes, and cast into the river Rhone, which flows by this place, that there might be not a vestige of them left upon the earth. For they said, *Now shall we see whether they will rise again, and whether their God can save them out of our hands.*"

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TRIUMPH OF MARCUS AURELIUS.

It was not many months after the date of that epistle that Marius, then expecting to leave Rome for a long time, and in fact about to leave it for ever, stood to witness the triumphal entry of Marcus Aurelius, almost at the exact spot from which he had watched the emperor's solemn return to the capital on his own first coming thither. It was a *full* triumph this time —*Justus Triumphus*—justified, by far more than the due amount of bloodshed in those Northern wars, now it might seem happily at an end. Among the captives, amid the laughter of the crowds at his blowsy upper garment, his trousered legs and conical wolf-skin cap, walked our own ancestor, representative of subject Germany, under a figure very familiar in later Roman sculpture; and, though certainly with none of the grace of the *Dying Gaul*, yet with plenty of uncouth pathos in his misshapen features and pale, servile, yet angry eyes. His children, white-skinned and golden-haired "as angels," trudged beside him. His brothers, of the animal world, the ibex, the wild-

cat, and the reindeer stalking and trumpeting grandly, found their due place in the procession; and among the spoil, set forth on a portable frame that it might be distinctly seen (not a mere model, but the very house he had lived in) a wattled cottage in all the simplicity of its snug contrivances against the cold, and well-calculated to give a moment's delight to his new, sophisticated masters.

Andrea Mantegna, working at the end of the fifteenth century, for a society full of antiquarian fervour at the sight of the earthy relics of the old Roman people, day by day returning to light out of the clay—childish still, moreover, and with no more suspicion of pasteboard than the old Romans themselves, in its unabashed love of open-air pageantries, has invested this, the greatest, and alas! the most characteristic, of the splendours of imperial Rome, with a reality livelier than any description. The homely sentiments for which he has found place in his learned paintings are hardly more lifelike than the great public incidents of the show, there depicted. And then, with all that vivid realism, how refined, how dignified, how select in type, is this reflection of the old Roman world! especially, in its time-mellowed red and gold, for the modern visitor to the old English palace.

It was under no such selected type that the great procession presented itself to Marius; though, in effect, he found something there, as it were prophetic, and evocative of ghosts; as susceptible minds will do,

in a repetition such as this, after a long interval, of some notable incident, which may yet perhaps have no direct concern for themselves. In truth, he had been so bent of late on certain very personal interests that the broad current of the world's doings seemed to have withdrawn into the distance, but now, in this procession, to return once more into evidence for him. That, at least, had been holding on its old way, and was all its old self, thus passing by dramatically, and accentuating, in this favourite spectacle, its mode of viewing things. And even without the contrast of a very different scene from that, he would have found it, just now, a somewhat vulgar spectacle. The temples, wide open, with their ropes of roses flapping in the wind against the rich, reflecting marble, their startling draperies and heavy cloud of incense, were but the centres of a great banquet spread through all the gaudily coloured streets of Rome, for which the carnivorous appetite of those who thronged them in the glare of the mid-day sun was frankly enough asserted. At best, they were but calling their gods to share with them the cooked, sacrificial, and other meats, reeking to the sky. The child, who was concerned for the sorrows of one of those Northern captives as he passed by, and explained to his comrade —"There's feeling in that hand, you know!" benumbed and lifeless as it looked in the chain, seemed, in a moment, to turn the whole show into its own proper tinsel. Yes! these Romans were a coarse, a vulgar people; and their vulgarity in full evidence

here. And Aurelius himself seemed to have undergone the world's coinage, and fallen to the level of his reward, in a mediocrity no longer golden.

Yet if, as he passed by (almost filling the quaint old circular chariot with his magnificent attire, flowered with gold) he presented himself to Marius, chiefly as one who had made the great mistake; to the multitude he came as a more than magnanimous conqueror. That he had "forgiven" the innocent wife and children of the dashing and almost successful rebel Avidius Cassius, now no more, was a recent circumstance still in memory. As the children went past, not among those who would presently be detached from the great progress for execution, ere the emperor on his knees ascended the steps of the Capitol, but happy and radiant, as adopted members of the imperial family, the crowd actually enjoyed a *moral* exhibition, which might become the fashion. And it was in concession to some possible touch of a heroism, that had really cost him something, in all this, that Marius resolved to seek the emperor once more, with an appeal for common sense, for reason and justice.

He had set out at last to revisit his old home; and knowing that Aurelius was then in retreat at the villa of Lorium, which lay almost on his way thither, determined there to present himself. Although the great plain was steadily dying, a new race of wild birds establishing itself there, as he knew enough of their habits to understand, and the idle *contadino*, with

his never-ending ditty always of decay and death, replacing the lusty Roman labourer, never had this poetic country between Rome and the sea impressed him more than on the sunless day of early autumn, under which all that fell within the immense horizon was presented in one uniform tone of a clear, penitential blue. Stimulating to the fancy as was that range of low hills to the northwards, already troubled with the upbreaking of the Apennines, yet the want of quiet in their outline, with a multitude of wild jaggs and sudden upheavals, marked them as but the ruins of nature; while at all the little ascents and descents of the road might be noted traces of the abandoned work of man. At intervals, the way was still redolent of the floral relics of summer, daphne and myrtle-blossom, in the little, sheltered hollows and ravines. At last, amid rocks here and there piercing the soil, as those descents became steeper, and the main line of the Apennines, now visible, gave a higher accent to the scene, he espied over the *plateau*, almost like one of those broken hills, cutting the horizon towards the sea, the old brown villa itself—favourite retreat of one after another of the family of the Antonines. As he approached it, reminiscences crowded upon him, above all of that old life there of Antoninus Pius, in its mansuetude and calm. It was here that his last moment had come, just as the tribune of the watch had received from his lips the word *Æquanimitas* / as the watchword of the night. To see their emperor living there like one of his simplest subjects, his

hands red at vintage-time with the juice of the grapes, hunting, teaching his children, starting betimes for long days, with all who cared to join, in antiquarian researches in the country around—all this had seemed to mean the peace of mankind.

Upon that had come (like a stain, it seemed to him, just then) the more intimate life of Faustina. Surely, that marvellous but malign beauty must still haunt those rooms, like an unquiet, dead goddess, who might have perhaps, after all, something reassuring to tell surviving mortals about her ambiguous self. When the news had come to Rome, two years before, that those eyes, always so persistently turned to vanity, had suddenly closed for ever, a strong desire to pray had come over Marius, as he followed in fancy on its wild way the soul of one he had spoken with now and again, and whose presence in it for a time the world of art could so ill have spared. Certainly, the honours freely accorded to embalm her memory were poetic enough—the rich temple left among those wild villagers at the spot, now it was hoped sacred for ever, where she had breathed her last; the golden image, in her old place at the amphitheatre; the altar at which the newly married might make their sacrifice; above all, the great foundation for orphan girls, to be called after her name.

It was precisely on account of that, that Marius failed to see Aurelius again, and make the chivalrous effort at enlightenment he had proposed to himself. Entering the villa, he learned from an usher, at the

closed door of the long gallery (famous in the memory of many a visitor, for its prospects) which led to the imperial apartments, that the emperor was already in audience: Marius must await his turn—he knew not how long it might be. An odd audience it seemed; for at that moment, through the closed door, came shouts of laughter, the laughter of a great crowd of children (the "Faustinian Children" themselves, as he afterwards learned) happy and at their ease, in the imperial presence. It was the vagueness of the time for which so pleasant a reception might last, so pleasant that he would hardly have wished to shorten it, which made Marius finally determine to proceed, it being necessary that he should accomplish the first stage of his journey on that day. The thing was not to be—*Vale! anima infelicissima!*—and he might at least carry away that sound of the laughing orphan children, as a not unamiable last impression of kings and their houses.

The place he was now about to visit, as the resting-place of his dead especially, had never been forgotten. Only, the first eager period of his life in Rome had slipped on rapidly; and, almost on a sudden, that old time had come to seem very long ago. An almost burdensome solemnity had grown about his memory of the place, so that to revisit it seemed a thing that needed preparation: it was what he could not have done hastily. He half feared to lessen, or disturb, its value for himself. And now as he travelled leisurely towards it, and so far with quite tranquil

mind, interested also in many another place by the way, he discovered a shorter road to the end of his journey, and found himself indeed approaching the spot that was to him like no other. Dreaming now only of the dead before him, he journeyed on rapidly through the night; the thought of the thing increasing on him, in the darkness. It was as if they had been waiting for him there all those years, and felt his footsteps approaching now, and understood his devotion, quite gratefully, in spite of its tardiness, in that lowliness of theirs. As morning came, his late tranquillity of mind had given way to a grief which surprised him by its freshness. He was moved more than he could have thought possible by so distant a sorrow. "*To-day!*"—they seemed to be saying, as the hard dawn broke,—"*To-day, he will come!*" At last, amid all his distractions, they had become the main purpose of what he was then doing. The world around it, when he actually reached the place later in the day, was in a mood very different—so work-a-day, it seemed, on that fine afternoon, and the villages he passed through so silent; the inhabitants being, for the most part, at their labour in the country. At last, above the tiled outbuildings, there were the walls of the old villa itself, with its tower for the pigeons; and among, not cypresses, but poplar-trees with leaves like golden fruit, the birds floating around it, the conical roof of the burial-place itself. In the presence of an old servant who remembered him, the great seals were broken, the rusty key turned at last

in the lock, the door was forced out among the weeds grown thickly about it, and Marius was actually in the place which had been so often in his thoughts.

He was shocked, with a touch of remorse however, only by an odd air of neglect, the neglect of a place merely allowed to remain as when it was last used, and left in a hurry, till long years had covered all alike with thick dust—the faded flowers, the burnt-out lamps, the tools and hardened mortar of the workmen who had had something to do there. A heavy fragment of woodwork had fallen and chipped open one of the oldest of the mortuary urns, many hundreds in number, ranged around the walls. It was not properly an urn, but a minute coffin of stone, and the fracture had revealed a piteous spectacle of the mouldering, unburned remains within; the bones of a child, as he understood, which might have died, in ripe age, three times over, since it slipped away from among his great-grandfathers, so far up in the line. Yet the protruding baby hand seemed to stir up in him feelings vivid enough, bringing him intimately within the scope of dead people's grievances. He noticed, side by side with the urn of his mother, that of a boy of about his own age—one of the serving-boys of the household—who had descended hither, from the light of childhood, almost at the same time with her. It seemed as if this boy of his own age had taken filial place beside her there, in his stead. That hard feeling, again, which had always lingered in his mind with the thought of the father he had

scarcely known, melted wholly away, as he read the precise number of his years, and reflected suddenly—*He was of my own present age; no hard old man, but with interests, as he looked round him on the world for the last time, even as mine to-day!* And with that came a blinding rush of kindness, as if two alienated friends had come to understand each other at last. There was weakness in all this; as there is in all care for dead persons, to which, however, people will always yield in proportion as they really care for each other. After all, with a vain yearning to be able to do something for them still, he reflected, as he stood there, that such doing, must be, in the nature of things, mainly for himself. His own epitaph might be that old one—ἔσχατος τοῦ ἰδίου γένους—*He was the last of his race!* Of those who might come hither after himself probably no one would ever again come quite as he had done to-day: and it was under the influence of this thought that he determined to bury all that, deep below the surface, to be remembered only by himself, and in a way which would claim no sentiment from the indifferent. That took many days—was like a renewal of lengthy old burial rites—as he himself watched the work, early and late; coming on the last day very early, and anticipating, by stealth, the last touches, while the workmen were absent: one young lad only, finally smoothing down the earthy bed, greatly surprised at the seriousness with which Marius flung in his flowers, one by one, to mingle with the dark mould.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ANIMA NATURALITER CHRISTIANA.

THOSE eight days at his old home, so mournfully occupied, had been for Marius in some sort a forcible disruption from the world and the roots of his life in it. He had been carried out of himself as never before; and when the time was over, it was as if the claim over him of the earth below had been vindicated, over against the interests of that living world around him. Dead, yet sentient and caressing hands seemed to reach out of the ground and to be clinging about him. Looking back sometimes now, from about the midway of life—the age, as he conceived, at which one begins to re-descend one's life—and antedating it a little, in his sad humour, he would note, almost with surprise, the unbroken placidity of the contemplation in which it had been passed. His own temper, his early theoretic scheme of things, would have pushed him on to movement and adventure. Actually, as circumstances had determined, all its movement had been inward; movement of observation only, or even of pure meditation; partly, perhaps,

because throughout it had been something of a *meditatio mortis*, ever facing towards the act of final detachment. But death, of course, as he reflected, must be for every one nothing less than that fifth or last act of a drama, and, as such, was likely to have something of the stirring character of a *dénouement*. And, in fact, it was in form tragic enough that his end not long afterwards came to him.

In the midst of the extreme weariness and depression which had followed those last days, Cornelius, then, as it happened, on a journey and travelling near the place, finding traces of him, had become his guest at White-nights. It was just then that Marius felt, as he had never done before, the value to himself, the overpowering charm, of his friendship. "More than brother!"—he felt—"like a son also!" contrasting the fatigue of soul which made himself practically an older man, with the other's irrepressible youth. For it was still the wonderful hopefulness of Cornelius, his seeming prerogative over the future, which determined, and kept alive, all other sentiment concerning him. A new hope had sprung up in the world of which he, Cornelius, was a depositary, which he must bear onward in it. Identifying himself with Cornelius in so dear a friendship, through him, Marius seemed to touch, to ally himself to, actually to possess for himself, the coming world; even as happy parents reach out, and take possession of it, in and through the survival of their children. For in these days their intimacy had grown very close, as they moved

hither and thither, leisurely, among the country-places thereabout, Cornelius being on his way back to Rome, till they came one evening to a little town (Marius remembered having been there on his first journey) which had even then its church and legend —the legend and holy relics of the martyr Hyacinthus, a young Roman soldier, whose blood had stained the soil of this place in the days of the emperor Trajan.

The thought of that so recent death, haunted Marius through the night, as if with audible sighs and crying above the restless wind, which came and went around their lodging. But towards dawn he slept heavily; and awaking in broad daylight, and finding Cornelius absent, set forth to seek him. The plague was still in the place—had indeed just broken out afresh; with an outbreak also of cruel superstition among its wild and miserable inhabitants. Surely, the old gods were wroth at the presence of this new enemy among them! And it was no ordinary morning into which Marius stepped forth. There was a menace in the dark masses of hill, and motionless wood, against the gray, although seemingly unclouded sky. Under this sunless heaven the earth itself seemed to fret and fume with a heat of its own, in spite of the strong night-wind. And now the wind itself had fallen. Marius seemed to be breathing some strange heavy fluid, denser than any common air. He could have fancied that the world had sunken in the night, far below its proper level, into

some close, thick abysm of its atmosphere. The Christian people of the town, hardly less terrified and overwrought by the haunting sickness about them than their pagan neighbours, were at prayer before the tomb of the martyr; and even as Marius pressed among them to a place beside Cornelius, on a sudden the hills seemed to roll like a sea in motion, around the whole compass of the horizon. For a moment Marius supposed himself attacked with some sudden sickness of brain, till the fall of a great mass of building convinced him that not himself but the earth under his feet was giddy. A few moments later the little market-place was alive with the rush of the distracted inhabitants from their tottering houses; and as they waited anxiously for the second shock of earthquake, a long-smouldering suspicion leapt precipitately into well-defined purpose, and the whole mass of people was carried forward towards the band of worshippers below. An hour later, in the wild tumult which followed, the earth had been stained afresh with the blood of the martyrs Felix and Faustinus—*Flores apparuerunt in terra nostra!*—and their brethren, together with Cornelius and Marius, thus, as it had happened, taken among them, were prisoners, reserved for the action of the law. Marius and his friend, with certain others, exercising the privilege of their rank, made claim to be tried in Rome, or at least in the chief town of the district; where, indeed, in the troublous days that had now begun, a legal process had been already instituted.

Under the care of a military guard the captives were removed, the same day, one stage of their journey; sleeping, for security, during the night, side by side with their keepers, in the rooms of a deserted shepherds' house by the wayside.

It was surmised that one of the prisoners was not a Christian: their guards were forward to make the utmost pecuniary profit of the circumstance, and during the night, Marius, taking advantage of the loose charge kept over them, and partly by a large bribe, had contrived that Cornelius, as the really innocent person, should be dismissed in safety on his way, to procure for him, as Marius explained, the proper means of defence, when the time of trial came.

And in the morning Cornelius in fact set forth alone, from their miserable place of detention. Marius believed that Cornelius was to be the husband of Cecilia; and that, perhaps strangely, had but added to the desire to get him away safely.—We wait for the great crisis which is to try what is in us: we can hardly bear the pressure of our hearts, as we think of it: the lonely wrestler, or victim, which imagination foreshadows to us, can hardly be oneself: it seems an outrage of our destiny that we should be led along so gently and imperceptibly, to so terrible a leaping-place in the dark, for more perhaps than life or death. At last, the great act, the critical moment, comes, easily, almost unconsciously. Another motion of the clock, and our fatal line — the "great climacteric point"—has been passed, which changes ourselves or

our lives. In one quarter of an hour, under a sudden, uncontrollable impulse, hardly weighing what he did, almost as a matter of course and as lightly as one hires a bed for one's night's rest on a journey, Marius had taken upon himself all the heavy risk of the position in which Cornelius had then been—the long and wearisome delays of judgment, which were possible; the danger and wretchedness of a long journey in this manner; possibly the danger of death. He had delivered his brother, after the manner he had sometimes vaguely anticipated as a kind of distinction in his destiny; though indeed always with wistful calculation as to what it might cost him: and in the first moment after the thing was actually done, he felt only satisfaction at his courage, at the discovery of his possession of "nerve."

Yet he was, as we know, no hero, no heroic martyr —had indeed no right to be; and when he had seen Cornelius depart, and, as he believed, on his blithe and hopeful way, to become the husband of Cecilia; actually, as it had happened, without a word of farewell, supposing Marius was almost immediately afterwards to follow (Marius indeed having avoided the moment of leave-taking with its possible call for an explanation of the circumstances) the reaction came. He could only guess, of course, at what might really happen. So far, he had but taken upon himself, in the stead of Cornelius, a great personal risk. It was danger, not even probable death, that he faced. Still, for one like himself especially, with all those sensi-

bilities of which his whole manner of life had been but an education, the situation of one under trial on a criminal charge was actually full of distress. To him, in truth, a death such as the recent death of those saintly brothers, seemed no glorious end. In his case, at least, the Martyrdom, as it was called—the overpowering act of testimony that Heaven had come down among men—would be but a common execution: from the drops of his blood there would spring no miraculous, poetic flowers; no eternal aroma would indicate the place of his burial; no plenary grace, overflowing for ever upon those who might stand around it. Had there been one to listen just then, there would have come, from the very depth of his desolation, an eloquent utterance at last, on the irony of men's fates, on the singular accidents of life and death.

The guards, now safely in possession of whatever money and other valuables the prisoners had had on them, pressed them forward, over the rough mountain paths, altogether careless of their sufferings. The great autumn rains were falling. At night the soldiers lighted a fire; but it was impossible to keep warm. From time to time they stopped to roast portions of the meat they carried with them, making their captives sit round the fire, and pressing it upon them. But weariness and depression of spirits had deprived Marius of appetite, even if the food had been more attractive, and for some days he partook of nothing but bad bread and water. All through the dark

mornings they dragged over boggy plains, and up and down hills, wet through sometimes with the heavy rain. Even in those deplorable circumstances, he could but notice the wild, dark beauty of those places —the stormy sunrise, and placid spaces of evening. One of the keepers, a very young soldier, won him at times, by his simple kindness, to talk a little, with wonder at the lad's half-conscious, poetic delight in the adventures of the journey. At times, the whole company would lie down for rest at the roadside, hardly sheltered from the storm; and in the deep fatigue of his spirit, his old longing for inopportune sleep overpowered him.—Sleep anywhere, and under any conditions, seemed at those times a thing one might well offer the remnants of one's life for.

It must have been about the fifth night, as he afterwards conjectured, that the soldiers, believing him likely to die, had finally left him unable to proceed further, under the care of some country people, who to the extent of their power certainly treated him kindly in his sickness. He awoke to consciousness after a severe attack of fever, lying alone on a rough bed, in a kind of hut. It seemed a remote, mysterious place, as he looked around in the silence; but so fresh (lying, in fact, in a high pasture-land among the mountains) that he felt he should recover, if only he might just lie there in quiet long enough. Even during those nights of delirium he had felt the scent of the new-mown hay pleasantly, with a dim sense for a moment that he was lying safe in his old home.

The sunlight lay clear beyond the open door; the sounds of the cattle reached him softly from the green places around. Recalling confusedly the torturing hurry of his late journeys, he dreaded, as his consciousness of the whole situation returned, the coming of the guards. But the place remained in absolute stillness. He was, in fact, at liberty, but for his own disabled condition. And it was certainly a genuine clinging to life that he felt just then, at the very bottom of his mind. It had been so, obscurely, even through all the wild fancies of his delirium, from the moment which followed his decision for Cornelius, against himself.

The occupants of the place were to be heard presently, coming and going on their business, about him: and it was as if the approach of death brought out in all their force the merely human sentiments. There is that in death which certainly makes indifferent persons anxious to forget the dead—to put them away out of their thoughts altogether, as soon as possible. Conversely, in the deep isolation of spirit which was now creeping upon Marius, the faces of these people, casually visible, took a hold on his affections; the link of general brotherhood, the feeling of human kinship, asserting itself most strongly when it was about to be severed for ever. At nights he would find this face or that impressed deeply on his fancy; and his mind would, in a troubled sort of manner, follow them onwards, on the ways of their simple, humdrum, everyday life, with a strange

yearning to share it with them, envying the calm, earthy cheerfulness of all their days to-be, still under the sun (but how indifferent, of course, to him!) as if these rude people had been suddenly lifted into some height of earthly good-fortune, which must needs isolate them from himself.

Tristem neminem fecit—he repeated to himself; his old prayer shaping itself now almost as an epitaph. Yes! so much the very hardest judge must concede to him. And the sense of satisfaction which that left with him disposed him to a conscious effort of recollection, while he lay there, unable now even to raise his head, as he discovered on attempting to reach a pitcher of water which stood near. Revelation, vision, the uncovering of a vision, the *seeing* of a perfect humanity, in a perfect world—through all his alternations of mind, by some dominant instinct, determined by the original necessities of his own nature and character, he had always set that above the *having*, or even the *doing*, of anything. For, such vision, if received with due attitude on his part, was, in reality, the *being* something, such as was surely a pleasant sacrifice to whatever gods there might be, observant of him. And how goodly had the vision been!—one long unfolding of beauty and energy in things, upon the closing of which he might gratefully utter his "*Vixi!*" Even then, just ere his eyes were to be shut for ever, the things they had seen seemed a veritable possession in hand; the persons, the places, above all, the touching image of

Jesus, apprehended dimly through the expressive faces, the crying of the children, in that mysterious drama, with a sudden sense of peace and satisfaction now, which he could not explain to himself. Surely, he had prospered in life! And again, as of old, the sense of gratitude seemed to bring with it the sense also of a living person at his side.

For still, in a shadowy world, his deeper wisdom had ever been, with a sense of economy, with a jealous estimate of gain and loss, to use life, not as the means to some problematic end, but, as far as might be, from dying hour to dying hour, an end in itself—a kind of music, all-sufficing to the duly trained ear, even as it died out on the air. Yet now, aware still in that suffering body of such vivid powers of mind and sense, as he anticipated from time to time how his sickness, practically without aid as he was in this rude place, was likely to end, and that the moment of taking final account was drawing very near, a consciousness of waste would come, with half-angry tears of self-pity, in his great weakness—a blind, outraged, angry feeling of wasted power, such as he would have himself experienced standing by the deathbed of another, in condition similar to his own.

And yet it was the fact, again, that the vision of men and things, actually revealed to him on his way through the world, had developed, with a wonderful largeness, the faculties to which it addressed itself, his whole general capacity of vision: and in that too was a success, in the view of certain, very definite,

well-considered, undeniable possibilities. Throughout that elaborate and lifelong education of his receptive powers, he had ever maintained the purpose of a self-preparation towards possible further revelation, some day—an ampler vision, which should take up into itself and explain this world's delightful shows, as the scattered fragments of a poetry, till then but half-understood, might be taken up into the text of a lost epic, recovered at last. At this moment, his unclouded receptivity of soul, grown so steadily through all those years, from experience to experience, was at its height; the house was ready for the possible guest, the tablet of the mind white and smooth, for whatsoever divine fingers might choose to write there. And was not this precisely the condition, the attitude of mind, to which something higher than he, yet akin to him, would be likely to reveal itself; to which that influence he had felt now and again like a friendly hand upon his shoulder, amid the actual obscurities of the world, would be likely to make a further explanation? Surely, the aim of a true philosophy must lie, not in futile efforts towards the complete accommodation of man to the circumstances in which he chances to find himself, but in the maintenance of a kind of ingenuous discontent, in the face of the very highest achievement; the unclouded and receptive soul quitting the world finally, with the same fresh wonder with which it had entered it still unimpaired, and going on its blind way at last with the consciousness of some profound enigma in things, as its pledge

of something further to come. Marius seemed to understand how one might look back upon life here, and its excellent visions, as but the portion of a race-course left behind him by a still swift runner: for a moment, he felt a curiosity and ardour, with dim trouble as of imminent vision, to enter upon a future, the possibilities of which seemed so large.

And just then, again amid the memory of certain touching actual words and images, came the thought of the great hope, that hope against hope, which, as he conceived, had arisen—*Lux sedentibus in tenebris*—upon the aged world; the hope which Cornelius had seemed to bear away upon him in his strength, with a buoyancy which had made Marius feel somehow, less that, by a caprice of destiny, he had been left to die in his place, than that Cornelius had gone on a mission to deliver him also from death. There had been a permanent protest established in the world, a plea, a perpetual afterthought, which humanity would henceforth ever possess in reserve, against a wholly mechanical and disheartening theory of itself and its conditions. It was a thought which relieved for him the iron outline of the horizon about him, touching it as if with soft light from beyond; filling the shadowy, hollow places to which he was on his way with the warmth of definite affections; and confirming also certain considerations by which he seemed to link himself to the generations to come in the world he was leaving. Yes! through the survival of their children, happy parents are able to think calmly, and with

a very practical affection, of a world in which they are to have no direct share; planting, with a cheerful good-humour, the acorns they carry about with them, that their grandchildren may be shaded from the sun by the broad oak-trees of the future. That is nature's way of easing death to us. It was thus too, surprised, delighted, that Marius, under the power of that new hope among men, could think of the generations to come after him. Without it, dim in truth as it was, he could hardly have dared to ponder the world which limited all he really knew, as it would be when he should have departed from it. A strange lonesomeness, like a physical darkness, seemed to settle over the thought of it; as if its business hereafter must be, as far as he was concerned, carried on in some inhabited, but distant and alien, star. But with the sense of that hope warm upon him, he seemed to anticipate a care for himself, never to fail even on earth, with a reverential care for his very body—that dear sister and companion of his soul, outworn, suffering, and in the very article of death, as it was now.

For the weariness came back tenfold; and he had finally to abstain from thoughts like those, as from what caused physical pain. And then, as before in the wretched, sleepless nights of those forced marches, he would try to fix his mind, as it were impassively, and like a child thinking over the toys it loves, one after another, that it may fall asleep so, and forget all about them, the sooner, on all the persons he had loved in life—on his love for them, dead or living, grateful for

his love or not, rather than on theirs for him—letting their images pass away again, or rest with him, as they would. In the bare sense of having loved he seemed to find, even amid this foundering of the ship, that on which his soul might "assuredly rest and depend." One after another, he suffered those faces and voices to come and go, as in some mechanical exercise, as he might have repeated all the verses he knew by heart, or like the telling of beads one by one, with many a sleepy nod between-whiles.

For there remained also, for the old earthy creature still within him, that great blessedness of physical slumber. To sleep, to lose oneself in sleep—that, as he had recognised always, was a good thing. And it was after a space of deep sleep that he awoke amid the murmuring voices of the people who had kept and tended him so carefully through his sickness, now kneeling around his bed: and what he heard confirmed, in his, then perfect, clearness of soul, the spontaneous suggestion of his own bodily feeling. He had often dreamt that he had been condemned to die, that the hour, with wild thoughts of escape, had arrived; and waking, with the sun all around him, in complete liberty of life, had been full of gratitude, for his place there, alive still, in the land of the living. He read surely, now, in the manner, the doings, of these people, some of whom were passing away through the doorway, where the sun still lay heavy and full, that his last morning was come, and turned to think again of the beloved. Of

old, he had often fancied that not to die on a dark and rainy day would itself have a little alleviating grace or favour about it. The people around his bed were praying fervently—*Abi! Abi! anima Christiana!* In the moments of his extreme helplessness their mystic bread had been placed, had descended like a snow-flake from the sky, between his lips. Soothing fingers had applied to hands and feet, to all those old passage-ways of the senses, through which the world had come and gone from him, now so dim and obstructed, a medicinable oil. It was the same people, who, in the grey, austere evening of that day, took up his remains, and buried them secretly, with their accustomed prayers; but with joy also, holding his death, according to their generous view in this matter, to have been of the nature of a martyrdom; and martyrdom, as the church had always said, a kind of sacrament with plenary grace.

THE END.

1881-1884.

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